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ABSTRACT

A study of historical background of the frontier and rural schools in Colorado describes education in the United State in general and the development of the educational process and school facilities during five phases of Colorado's economic and political development. "The Nation" discusses philosophies generally held during the middle 1800s which influenced educational practices. "Colorado: The Pre-Statehood Years" describes the effects of gold mining on public schools and describes school district establishment in Larimer county as typical of that time. "Colorado: Early Statehood (1876-1900)" describes the legal, historical, and social developments of that era and examines Weld County as typical. "Colorado: Early Twentieth Century (1900-1920)" describes the effects of new population growth on Colorado's rural school districts and discusses centralization and consolidation as the major forms of rural school improvement during the period. "Colorado: 1920-1940" discusses the influence on the rural schools of the Great Depression, and the trend toward rural decline. "Colorado: 1940-1950" discusses the impact of problems with aging school buildings, teacher recruitment and tenure, school funding, population shifts, changing economic interests, and post-War social trends on rural school systems. (CM)

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**SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:
FRONTIER AND RURAL SCHOOLS IN COLORADO, 1859-1950**

By

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Colorado Association for Local History

Denver, Colorado



Written Under the Auspices of The
National Endowment for the Humanities-
Mountain Plains Library Association
Project

COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER
Andrew Gulliford, Project Director
1981

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

The Mountain Plains Library Association is pleased to be involved in this project documenting the country school experience. Funding of this project from the National Endowment for the Humanities, cost sharing and other contributions enabled us all to work with the several state-based Humanities Committees as well as many other state and local libraries, agencies and interested citizens. We are deeply impressed not only by the enthusiasm for this work by all concerned but by the wealth of experience brought to bear in focusing attention on—and recapturing—this important part of history, and how we got here. This project seems to identify many of the roots and “character formation” of our social, political and economic institutions in the West.

Already the main Project objective seems to be met, stimulating library usage and increasing circulation of historical and humanities materials in this region. Public interest is rising in regional, state and local history. Oral history programs are increasing with greater public participation. The study of genealogy—and the search for this information—is causing much interest in consulting—and preserving—historical materials. What has been started here will not end with this project. The immediate results will tour the entire region and be available for any who wish the program, film, and exhibit. There will be more discussion of—and action on—the issues involving the humanities and public policies, past and present. The Mountain Plains Library Association is proud to be a partner in this work, the Country School Legacy, and its contribution to understanding humanities on the frontier.

Joseph J. Anderson
Nevada State Librarian
Past President
Mountain Plains Library Association

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To Andrew Gulliford for his patience and my mother for her
attention to detail.

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FOREWORD

Social and cultural history represents one of the most difficult and complex challenges to the humanist and historian. This is, of course, because it is not simply a survey of treaties, enactments, and documents, but attempts to gauge the ebb and flow of human motive, thought, opinion, and action and relate these to a larger framework of general historical change and development. As such, social and cultural history is prone to a number of weaknesses.

The first, and most significant of these is that of the humanist-historian's prejudice in favor of his sources--no matter who or what they are. One is sorely tempted to believe--and many succumb to this temptation--that those sources one has tapped are undoubtedly the most interesting, revealing, authoritative, and valid in existence. The result of this prejudice is the presentation of that particular humanist-historian's work as the "last and final" word on the subject--"truth."

The second weakness--and this grows directly from the first--is the belief that the particular social and cultural history presented by a single humanist-historian is the only valid and accurate study of the subject. The result of this prejudice is that the writer does not simply expound his findings in regard to the subject matter--he

pontificates upon it because his is the last and final word—at least in his own estimation.

A third weakness is the presentation of a false sense of comprehensiveness in his particular treatment of a subject. In the interest of demonstrating his authority and complete awareness of his subject, the humanist-historian often presents his findings in a frame of reference which predisposes the supposition of its comprehensiveness by the reader. The result of this is a false sense of security—on the part of the humanist-historian as well as the reader of his work.

In recognizing these three areas of weakness which humanists and historians dealing with social and cultural history are prone to, let me point out that I am (and this work is) guilty, to some degree, of all three.

The objectivity of the humanist-historian, while a valuable contribution to the fairness and rationality with which he treats his subject, must function within the subjectivity of his existence as an individual intellect. Social and cultural phenomena, therefore, themselves the progeny of individuality and subjectivity, provide an exceptionally onerous challenge to the humanist-historian.

The solution to this challenge and conundrum of individuality-subjectivity may be found, however, in the practice of logical historiography. Historiography may be thought of as "the science of his-

tory"—that is, usually, "the science of the writing of history." Comprehensiveness, although it must be recognized to some extent as a "finite ideal," must be accepted by the humanist-historian as a possible, approachable ideal. (The alternative, of course, is the recording of personal, subjective history only without the interpretative matrix of the larger view.) In his determination of the context and reality of this "approachable ideal," the humanist-historian must delineate the major "tools" of his investigative science: documentary evidence, actual experience and events (both the personal and larger-scale), and interpretation. It is upon this delineation that any approach to "logical historiography" must rely.

As the chemical analysis of a compound results in the identification of the major elemental components of that compound along with any trace elements present, so must the historiographic analysis of human social and cultural phenomena seek to discover the major and most influential elements present in the origination and activity of a humanistic phenomenon along with the accessory factors present which exerted some effect upon it. Once analyzed and identified, these several elements and factors may be re-combined in differing proportions for the purpose of creating a new and wholly different compound. Thus, the humanist-historian approaches a certain area of human interaction and activity for the purpose of delineating its significant and operational elements, taking them "apart," analyzing

them, and then re-combining them into a new and (hopefully) more enlightening form--written history.

To be more specific in regard to the subject of the Country School Legacy Project, the major components of the nebulous "compound" of the past may be delineated as (to return to the "tools" of historiography) documentary evidence, the large-scale course of events, the local-smaller scale of events, personal experience, and other minor elements, such as social trends, local influences, and topical issues. A necessary adjunct to this "compound" is also interpretive material regarding the meaning, associations, and evaluation of significances regarding the major subject matter and its component elements in human events as a whole. The fullest understanding of the phenomena of frontier and country schools depends upon the degree to which all of these elements and components are interpolated and treated--and, conversely, no treatment that avoids or overlooks any of these elements can adequately address the complexity required for social and cultural history to take on its real historical and human relevance and value.

Thus it may be seen that this analysis of frontier and rural education in Colorado represents only a contribution to the totality of this humanistic history which has yet to be compiled and written. The National Endowment for the Humanities--Mountain Plains Library Association Project, "Country School Legacy," has provided the gene-

sis of this compilation of sources, brief historical survey, and interpretive foray into this valuable and interesting subject. Under the auspices of this Project important fundamental steps have been taken in the direction of making some determination regarding the influence, significance, and role of Colorado frontier and country schools, both in the development of the state and in the growth of the nation as a whole. It is clear to me as humanist-historian that this project has represented a key contribution to the pursuit of this subject which eventually will result in the production of one or more major written treatments placing the subject into a larger historical context. Without this key "groundwork," however—researching extant documentary sources, identifying and interviewing personal witnesses to this social phenomenon, and the establishment of a central archive upon which future humanists and historians may draw—progress in the direction of drawing valid conclusions as to the significance of the Colorado frontier and country schools would have been severely retarded.

My particular contribution to this larger Project, as represented in part by this report, treats no single historiographic element in detail, but draws upon all in varying degrees and for differing purposes. It is clearly slanted in the direction of documentary evidence, and this was intentional. It was presumed that, since a major aspect of the work on this Project entailed the collection of

oral history on the subject, that reports by my counterparts and associates would focus on this area of historiographic "tool." Undoubtedly, reference is made in other reports to documentary sources and interpretive material, but this is reasonably expected to be minimal. Thus, it is the objective of this report to take the opposite approach--the mirror image--of these reports. By surveying many of the documentary sources a different viewpoint is presented, perforce, than those developed from and based upon personal (oral history) viewpoints. This report has been completed in the interest of providing something of a macrocosm through which to view and interpret the microcosm of the individual oral historical views.

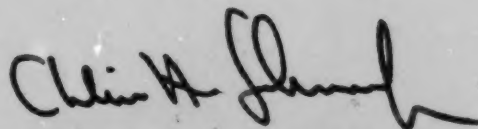
In regard to the six major areas of inquiry for the Country School Legacy Project (schools as historic sites, schools as community centers, schools and the Americanization of ethnic groups, the country school curriculum, teachers, and the country schools today), a reading of this report will demonstrate that while many of these subjects have been treated peripherally to the documentary material discussed and described, not all have been treated uniformly or equally. In taking the documentary approach research was pursued into each of these subjects, but not all produced equal amounts of documentation. This is not to say that definitive documentation does not exist for each and every one of these subjects, but just that such documentation was not encountered beyond the point at which it is pre-

sented here. Further research and investigation on the documentary level will, undoubtedly, produce additional evidence and material on these subjects.

Although it has been made clear that funding for this project was not intended to contribute towards detailed documentary research (as its emphasis was placed upon the collection of oral history research), important motivation operates to justify a degree of documentary research. While the collection, organization, and interpretation of oral history research provides a valid and significant contribution to historiographic knowledge itself, such data represents--and ultimately, must totally represent--the microcosm. Therefore, to approach the fullest comprehension and understanding of a subject matter some background and understanding of the larger historical context must be applied. It is in this interest that this report is submitted--as a necessary humanistic and historical background against which the individual oral historical material may be placed to gain some sense of perspective. While it is in no way a comprehensive historical background, it does supply sufficient historical background from which the oral historical material may be viewed and better understood.

Without the macrocosm the microcosm is meaningless: the atom in the microscope could be a distant solar system viewed through a telescope if the scientist himself did not recognize the direction

of his gaze, the instrument through which it is directed, and the relative size of the object being observed. As such, this report is complementary to those reports in Colorado which have concentrated upon the microscopic, oral historical viewpoint by providing the student with something of a macroscopic viewpoint in which to locate himself, his material, and its relative size and importance.



Charlie H. Johnson, Jr.

Oceanso, California

April 29, 1981

THE NATION

By the middle of the nineteenth century American education had developed from a rather haphazard and patchwork phenomenon into something approaching a national movement. Education prior to the Civil War relied chiefly upon the informal instruction of the young through the imitation of adult activities: "...the youngster learned by watching and doing. No special teacher taught these things; they were learned by direct participation in the activities themselves. Society was still simple enough so that behaviors, attitudes, and values people were expected to know and use could be learned in this way."¹ Formal schooling was the exception, not the rule.

As times changed, however, so did the climate and need for more formalized educational techniques in the United States. While the formation and establishment of "common schools"—public elementary schools commonly available to the populace at large—actually had begun before the end of the eighteenth century and had spread gradually throughout the first half of the nineteenth, confidence in such an external influence on children was regarded with some distrust. By 1830 the need for some degree of common public education grew out of the evolving American society itself. Although not looked upon as formal schooling, mechanic's institutes, lecture programs, workers' and free public libraries, and such institutions as the lyceum all grew out of and contributed to the impetus of this movement towards more formalized edu-

cation. Between 1830 and 1860 the force and legitimacy of this movement increased: "...almost as if in inexorable response to their changing way of life, Americans during these years forged one of the most revolutionary educational developments of modern times--their public school system."²

By the 1840's and '50's the traditional attitude in America that formal education was a luxury purchased by the more affluent for their children was in decline. The formulation of the concept for public support of community formal education furthered the transition from the strong, older tradition to a newer, more democratic tradition. "By 1865 ...enough of a general development had taken place to say that the principle of public support for common schools had definitely taken root and that the American people were definitely committed to it."³ Important to the success of this principle was the localized framework for school control, the district. The concept of locally-controlled and supported school districts was originated in 1789 in Massachusetts, and this approach to school establishment and operation appealed to the American sense of independence and freedom. Secondary to the local school district in authority over the formation and operation of schools was the state or territorial government.

Not only was the institution of the public school generally accepted by the mid-1860's, but so was its educational program. This "program," although not formulated as such at this time, was based

upon some very powerful precepts:

The first of these was that education should contribute to the personal character and moral development of the child. A second was that education should create a mental discipline in the thought and activities of the child. Another was that universal literacy was an expected outcome of education. It was the role of education to contribute to the democratic citizenship and social participation of the child. Two subsequent precepts were to arise in the wake of these original four, but they took on more importance as the nineteenth century passed into the twentieth: Education should provide some degree of vocational or practical competence in the child; education should contribute to the ultimate success in life of the student.

Growing out of these precepts came the educational method of the common school--three major characteristics of which would influence small school education far into the twentieth century: 1) "The aim of course after course was the digestion of knowledge...and all too often meaning and practical application was subordinated to, if not displaced by, simple memorization." 2) "A good deal of instruction was on an individual basis." 3) The instructional technique became predominant in which the teacher would teach a certain body of knowledge to one or a handful of older students who would, in turn, teach it to the younger students.

Within this framework the role of the teacher developed and

evolved from that of "schoolkeeper"—that is, little more than a babysitter in a situation away from home—to "schoolmaster" responsible for the inculcation of knowledge. The mid-nineteenth century common school teacher's social and "professional" role was determined by a number of circumstances:

To begin with, "Their salaries were a bit above those of skilled labor..."⁶ --far below those of other "professionals" of the day. Secondly, there was the tradition, handed down from colonial times, in which the teacher was "boarded around" among the several families in a district, thus, "They had no private lives of their own and were subjected to every possible hardship—always being strangers and 'extras' in the households where they stayed."⁷ Third was the tradition of "genteel respectability" which subjected teachers to "...special rules regarding smoking, drinking, courting, church going, teaching Sunday school, leaving town...(from which they) had little recourse when conservative community leaders made inordinate demands."⁸ Two other factors further contributed to this baneful situation: the youth of the teachers and their rapid turnover rate within single districts.

On the other side of this situation, the teachers themselves often brought little in the way of professional education and background to their jobs. A common school education through grade eight (at the most, often) without any specialized courses in educational theory or pedagogy was often the highest expectations by local school boards;

Beginning teachers were usually in their mid or late teens with very little experience of life beyond their own home life and schooling.

In a sense, the development of American education had reached a significant plateau in the early 1860's, and the pace of its evolution and expansion was on the increase. If this pace had been dramatic, that which was to take place in the latter decades of the century was all but revolutionary. "The years between 1865 and 1918 mark the transition from an old to a modern America...the keynote of (the post-Appomattox)...years was greater and faster expansion in all areas of life."⁹ A major contributor to this increased pace of development in the United States, of course, was mechanization and industrialization. While the effects of both of these forces were felt throughout American society, agricultural progress in this area contributed most apparently to change in rural America. "Between 1860 and 1890 the value of farm machinery...doubled (signifying a vast increase in the availability of new and different types of farm machinery--and its purchase and use); When this is combined with the fact that in the thirty years after 1870 more land was added to America's farms than all the farming acreage developed since the earliest settlements, the phenomenal increase in agricultural yields begins to be explained."¹⁰ Demographically, this doubling of America's agricultural lands meant also a doubling of agrarian, rural culture.

A corollary factor in this rural growth was the making of for-

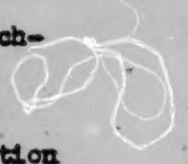
sign immigration into the U.S. in the decade of the 1880's. In the decade 1860-1870 immigration brought over 2.3 million newcomers to America; 1870-1880, 2.8 million; 1880-1890, 5.2 million; 1890-1900, 3.6 million.¹¹ These immigrants came chiefly from northern and western Europe, and, since the lure of land ownership had been a primary attraction, they moved in large numbers away from their urban landings to rural settings where hard work made this goal realizable.

"A combination of these factors brought about a gradual change in the age composition of the American people. The crux of this change—one with important educational implications—seems to have been a reduction in the proportion of young people, an increase in the proportion of older people, and an increase in the median age."¹² The primary educational "implication" derived from this may be that, since the numbers of the young ^{were} proportionately low and the numbers of adults proportionately higher, the financial and organizational availability of an educational system was positive. (Given a reverse set of circumstances, one wonders if formal education as an institution would have evolved in late-nineteenth century America as it did?)

Implicit in the population and development of the American frontier between 1860 and 1900 were two psychological and philosophical forces which, as much as the economic values, contributed to the nation's educational system: progress and optimism. Both of these concepts grew out of the philosophical doctrine of idealism which placed

emphasis upon spiritual formulations of the universe as opposed to material predestination. This assertion was typically American and allied with the course of development which seemed to be natural for a people whose destiny it was to civilize a continent. Thus, optimism was the embodiment of "manifest destiny" as hope was transformed into positive action, and progress represented the day-to-day development of this force in everyday life.

Thus idealism in various ways promoted outlooks that were to have important influences upon American education. The stress upon human personality as an end in itself, the emphasis upon respect for the growth and unfolding of the child's personality as a pedagogical method, and the vision that individuals were inextricably related to other individuals in a social and spiritual community were important ingredients of a new philosophy of education. ¹³

Tempering optimism and the value of progress as key principles behind the institution of education on America's agricultural frontier were the assertions of John Dewey in the latter decades of the century. Although other philosophers and educators also advocated the principles of pragmatism, it was Dewey's distinctive delineation of the values of human knowledge based upon empirical analysis that became the watchword for a new "progressivism" in education. 

Dewey's social conception of mind led him to look upon education as basically a social process. His pragmatic theory of knowledge led him to look upon thinking as an educational method of problem solving. His whole philosophic and educational outlook was based upon a conception of experience that led him to affirm that education should be grounded firmly upon moral commitments to a democratic way of life. ¹⁴

Thus, it may be seen that opinions regarding the character and nature of education were undergoing analysis and change. As the century came closer to its close this analysis of the technique and purpose of education increased: "In the minds of many the simple curricula proposed by the early school reformers could no longer meet the demands of an industrial society."¹⁵ Additional demands were placed upon the nation's educational systems with the passage of compulsory attendance laws, which by 1900 affected 32 states. One important response to these forces of change in education was the development of programs for manual training, industrial and commercial education, and agricultural instruction in the public schools (with concentration, of course, at the upper ends of the grade scale and on the secondary level).

While it was the latter decades of the nineteenth century that generated these new forces for change in the public schools, both urban and rural, it was the early years of the twentieth century which brought them to fruition. "In effect, schools grew from an uncertain infancy in 1865 into a young maturity by 1918."¹⁶ In 1865 something less than half of the school age children were actually in attendance at some form of school; by 1918 this number increased to well over 70 per cent. Public high schools, of which there had been only about two hundred in 1865, had increased substantially by 1918. The educational curriculum itself had changed considerably: "Active training for self-

expression and citizenship entered the halls of an elementary school which had formerly devoted itself largely to transmitting knowledge and moral precept. Preparation for trade and vocation increasingly became a part of high school.¹⁷ Compulsory attendance laws and the introduction of the kindergarten on a wide scale substantially increased the school's actual populations. By 1918, "...the public elementary school was beginning to affect the great majority of American children."¹⁸ On the secondary level, "...by the end of World War I the number of public high schools had spiraled to 25,000 with an attendance of over 1,600,000 youngsters."¹⁹

With all these changes in the number, dispersal, and character of the public schools in the United States, however, the district unit of organization was still substantially the same: "School districts... continued to play a major role in carrying on the actual business of education, and in the majority of communities, the people continued to make immediate decisions within a framework of state policy."²⁰ Even this situation was beginning to change. School districts were beginning to centralize and consolidations were becoming the most practical means, particularly in the rural areas, whereby schools could be improved towards more efficiency and effectiveness. "Where consolidation did take place, results were quickly evident in the form of larger schools with better instructional services. Where the autonomous district persisted, the trying conditions associated with the one-room school continued to plague educational efforts."²¹

The post-World War I years were to bring an even more dramatic series of changes in the American educational system. The growth of the United States as a world military power, economic force, and social proving-ground was to place increasing demands upon its educational system which has brought it into the context of one of the leading systems of the world in size, scope, and contrast.

By the mid-point of the twentieth century America was,

...facing the greatest challenges in her history....The problem was clear--whether democratic civilization as the West had known it could preserve its traditional freedom and moral commitments while adjusting to the demands of industrial (and technological) life. Cast in the system of the...historian, Arnold Toynbee, the question was one of whether or not Western civilization...(with America as its epitome) could meet the challenge of the age. While no one could predict the answer with certainty, one thing did seem clear: that education as a social force would play a major part in the ultimate decision.²²

THE NATION

Notes

1

R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin. A History of Education in American Culture (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953). p. 237.

2

Ibid. p. 241.

3

Ibid. p. 244.

4

Ibid. p. 274.

5

Ibid.

6

Ibid. p. 285.

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Ibid.

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Ibid.

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Ibid. p. 293.

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Ibid. pp. 303-304.

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Ibid. p. 308.

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Ibid. pp. 308-309.

13

Ibid. p. 331.

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Ibid. p. 344.

15
Ibid. p. 357.

16
Ibid. p. 404.

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Ibid. p. 415.

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Ibid. p. 419.

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Ibid. p. 429.

21
Ibid. p. 431.

22
Ibid. p. 463.

COLORADO:
THE PRE-STATEHOOD YEARS

The earliest exploration of the trans-Mississippi west had made it manifestly clear that this was a country different in kind from that with which most Americans had become accustomed earlier in the nineteenth century. Distances were vast. The effects of the elements were intense and often dramatic. This was a land of significant hostility to the forces of civilization, and, at the same time, a land of considerable opportunity. The life there would stretch the will and strength of man to its utmost and call for a concentration of energy and application perhaps previously unknown on the continent by white men.

While the Spaniards had visited Colorado in the sixteenth century and later, it was the coming of Americans from the east in the 1840's and afterwards that began to trace the land's destiny. The discovery of gold in the Colorado foothills in 1858 finally set in motion economic forces which made this wilderness something more than a stopping-off place on the journey westward. While the predominant attraction was mineral, agricultural pursuits soon developed as important in the attraction of civilized population to the area as well as the settlement of the area for long-term habitation.

1859 and 1860, the earliest years of Colorado's colonization, brought men who were interested in instant wealth--and little in the

way of aspirations beyond this goal: "Seekers after gold, as a rule, are not distinguished for their interest in the cause of education. While it is true that a few immigrants came west in search of permanent homes, in the early days the great majority of men were men without their families, who had no other thought than to make their fortunes and return to the east."¹ Although, as noted, there were those who came with other purposes in mind, it was the rapacious character of the majority who set the tone of the times: "This class seriously retarded any movement looking toward the laying of foundations upon which an educational system could ultimately be built. The setting up of a civilized community, or permanent colonization scheme had no place in their program."²

The vast majority of those who came with the intention of wresting the gold from the landscape and stealing back into the civilization of the east to spend it were soon disappointed. Work was involved; an investment of time and effort was required before any wealth was to be given up by the mountains. The recognition of this fact brought about a transformation in the thought of those who remained to mine their fortunes: their period of residency would be long-term and would require social and economic institutions to support it; their extraction of the mineral wealth from the hills involved also personal investment which was non-monetary—but emotional; life would be lived in those hills and this would necessarily include those com-

non occurrences of life, marriage and children. "When it became apparent that mining was to be a permanent industry, the complexion of the population changed and the need for public schools was recognized."³

In recognition of this, schools were naturally brought into existence: The first schoolhouse was built in the Boulder area in 1860, the second in the area was established and built in Golden just a short while later.⁴

Efforts towards the designation of territorial status for the Colorado area began as early as 1859, but were not finally effective until February, 1861, when "...the bill passed both houses of Congress and became a law when President Buchanan attached his signature. ...The Territory of Colorado was born and christened...."⁵

"Among the acts passed by the First Legislative Assembly of Colorado, held at Denver, in 1861, was a very comprehensive school law...."⁶ This school law outlined the basic characteristics of a Colorado State educational system, many elements of which still exist in the late twentieth century. A Territorial Superintendent of Common Schools office was created and began operations in December, 1861. For an annual salary of \$500 the Superintendent was empowered with the authority to oversee the Territorial educational system and supervise its growth in response to the increase in population in the area. In addition, he was responsible for recommending to the several existing

districts a uniform series of textbooks for public school use.

This initial stage in the state's educational organization was undoubtedly very frustrating. The district system had been adopted by the Territory from states to the east, but the original concept of the school "district" took on different proportions on the frontier: "Some of the first school districts organized were as large as states (back east), while the school population numbered less than a score."⁷

With Boulder and Golden already operating schools, the growing metropolis of Denver had already begun action in the fall of 1861: "The meeting was held in front of a rude store building....A dry goods box was used for a platform. The district was organized and a board of directors elected."⁸ Shortly afterwards the first school in the community that was soon to play an important part in the State's history was set up. This did not take place in a school building, however, but "...in the second story of a building on what is now Larimer, between Tenth and Eleventh Streets...."⁹ By fall of 1862 Central City¹⁰ had organized its district and was making plans for its own school.

The 1861 legislation also created the offices of County Superintendent of Schools whose duties were the supervision of the schools and school districts within the political jurisdiction of the local county. This office was to act in cooperation with that of the Territorial Superintendent by collecting reports and information and acting

as intermediary in the handing down of rules and regulations from the Territorial office to the local level.

Within the district system, local boards of education were to be elected from community members, and these boards most commonly consisted of three members with officers elected from that number. Beside the responsibility for organizing and providing for education at the local level, the boards of education were also empowered with the authority to fund this educational enterprise through property tax levies within the area of their jurisdictions.

Recognizing that the improved property in most areas of the state was minimal and that additional sources for school financing would not only be desirable, but probably necessary, the Second Territorial Legislature, in 1862, provided for the following supplement to school funds: "That hereafter when any new mineral lode, of either gold bearing quartz, silver, or other valuable metal, shall be discovered in this Territory, one claim of one hundred feet in length on such lode shall be set apart and held in perpetuity for the use and benefit
11
of schools...."

It was anticipated that this innovative approach to school finance would, in light of the untold mineral riches contained by the Territory, facilitate the educational enterprise in the area while, at the same time, reduce the tax burden on individual property owners.

W.J. Curtice, the first Territorial Superintendent of Common Schools, responded to his new position with the following charge to the public to carry out the most important phase of the first school laws:

It now remains for the people and their duly chosen officers, to imitate (sic.) the commendable zeal of the Legislative Assembly in behalf of education, by carrying into effect the school law and inaugurating a public school system in every county of the Territory. In discharging this duty, we shall not only remove a great barrier--want of schools--to the rapid settlement of the country, but will be developing an educational system among us, for the future, of greater value than the gold of our mountains, and a better safeguard to society than the elective franchise or standing armies.¹²

The idealism and optimism voiced in this charge, however, was not uniformly met among the newly-arrived Territorial residents. This possibility was anticipated by Superintendent Curtice, who pointed out to the County Superintendents,

In entering upon the discharge of your duties you may find, owing to the absorbing character of the pursuits of many of our people ...that comparatively slight regard will be paid to the interests of education...the same might be observed of any other interest unconvertable immediately into money. You may not meet with that ready cooperation of the mass of the community in your work that would be desirable....¹³

This desired interest and cooperation was indeed slow in evolving—even from the County Superintendents themselves. Mr. Curtice resigned his office in 1863 and left no records—probably because there were no records to leave. His successor also, "...left no records of his doings, and the presumption is that little or nothing was done...

probably from the fact...of an insufficiency of working material."¹⁴

At the Territorial Legislature's fourth session in 1865 the office of Superintendent of Common Schools was replaced by Superintendent of Public Instruction (salary \$500 per year). At the same time the Territorial Treasurer was appointed ex officio to the Superintendent's position. "There are no reports of his official work. The same may¹⁵ be said of his successor's in 1866 and 1867."

The fifth Legislative session brought legislation "...making it a misdemeanor to jump mineral claims that had been set apart for schools, or for failing to relinquish such claims as had previously been pre-empted...."¹⁶ Other legislative action this session provided "...for giving to the colored people a pro rata share of the school fund for the maintenance of separate schools."¹⁷

The first real report made to the Territorial Legislature from a Superintendent of Public Instruction came from Mr. Columbus Nuckolls in late 1867. The report was not a positive one. It began, "The reports required by law from the several counties...have, up to date, been received only from two--Pueblo and Clear Creek Counties--which, consequently, gives me no material upon which I can give the summary of¹⁸ our Territorial schools...." He went on to caution the Legislature that there were problems with the operations of the school mining claims and that laws should be enacted to protect this important school funding source. He also cautioned against the sales of school property

without the knowledge or approval of the Territorial officials. He then went on to outline a major hindrance he had met in carrying out his duties: "I would also state that several counties have never, even when requested, informed the Superintendent of Public Instruction...and it is not yet known to him whether there are any (schools), in those counties...or whether there is any responsible county organisation." He further recommended that the Legislature pass laws to punish those local and county officers if they failed to file such reports as were necessary to the completion of his duties.

Two years later, in his annual report to the Legislature in 1869, Mr. Nuckolls indicated little progress: "...the Secretaries of the District Boards fail to include in their reports all the items which the law requires, and in many cases have entirely neglected to make any report, and I am unable to give any reliable statistics relative to the number of schools, teachers, or pupils." Included also in this report the Superintendent outlined some changes he saw as necessary in teacher certification by local County Superintendents, the duties of these officers themselves, some changes in school apportionment and taxation, and he, again requested some punishment for school boards and officers failing to file their reports appropriately.

At this time the office of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction was still an ex officio position held by the Territo-

rial Treasurer, and Nuckolls was in the unique situation to see the weakness of this set-up: "I would recommend...the propriety of making the office of School Superintendent a separate and distinct office, as our population and large increase in children in the Territory seem to demand....a separate office, and a competent Superintendent of Public Instruction be appointed or elected, and paid a sufficient salary to give our Territorial school system his undivided attention."

A typical case of school district establishment of this time may be seen in that of Larimer County. In response to a request from several county residents, the Larimer County Superintendent of Schools wrote:

You are hereby authorized to post notice in your district (No. One) for the purpose of an organization, the Western Boundary line having been extended to the Snowy Range. You will proceed to organize according to law and make your report to me.

From the "Western Boundary" of the Snowy Range, this first area school district extended all the way across the county to its eastern boundary-- but its north and south boundaries were undefined, extending as far as the county lines (presumably). The school census taken shortly afterwards enumerated 16 children between the ages of five and 21.

At the organizational meeting for the school district itself 12 people attended. School board officers were elected and the meeting was adjourned. The date was January 16, 1869.

At the second school district meeting, held two weeks later, a mo-

tion to build a schoolhouse was defeated eight to one. A school tax levy of \$125 was accepted, and the board treasurer's salary of \$5.00 per business day was set.²³

At later meetings that same year the board of directors was re-elected and a committee was set up to investigate the building of a school. Final decision to build a log schoolhouse came in September of 1870 but, due to the organization of another district in the county and competition for the limited county education funds, it was not completed and paid for until early January of 1871. School actually began in June of that year, and the first teacher, Arak Sprague, was paid \$200 for the first term from June 5 to September 22.²⁴

Thus, the schools were started in Larimer County.

In the meantime, within the Territorial government little was changed. "The chaotic condition of school affairs continued until 1870."²⁵ However, the failure to provide reports to the Territorial Superintendent was not the most serious of these problems: "It was no uncommon thing for the school funds to be misappropriated by both county and district officers."²⁶

Notwithstanding these problems for school establishment and development on the frontier, public school advancement was taking place-- as Larimer County's experience had demonstrated. "One hundred sixty school districts were organized by 1871, and one hundred twenty schools

were in operation. According to the census of that year, there were 7,742 children of school age in the Territory of which 4,357²⁷ were enrolled in the public schools."

1870 had also been an important year in that the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction became autonomous of other Territorial offices—and the salary for the office was increased to \$1,000 per year.

The year 1870 may be seen as something of a line of demarcation in Colorado between the early struggles for the institutionalization of a state public school system and the latter period in which this aspiration moved more rapidly and decisively towards fulfillment. "With this year there seemed to have begun a new era—a transition, as it were, from infancy to youth; temporary measures and temporary structures gave way to permanency."²⁸

The year 1870 was also something of a turning point for the Colorado Territory itself, now taking on more the complexion of a settled area rather than a raw frontier: "...it had been completely demonstrated that Colorado was to become more than a mere mining camp, or a series of them. The favorable results of irrigation had demonstrated beyond a doubt that farming was, ultimately, to play an important part in the settlement of the region."²⁹ As was the case often in the west, civilization followed water: "Irrigating canals of great extent were projected, colonies founded, immigration increased, and all

circumstances tended towards the upbuilding of a great commonwealth."³⁰

The effects of this development were bound to find reflection in the educational system: "Costly public school houses sprang up as if by magic."³¹ By the end of the Territorial period, in mid-1876, Colorado had operating school districts and schools in more than 17 counties.

Even after the year 1870, however, circumstances for the establishment of schools had their own frontier way of evolving: For example, one of the first schools in Routt County developed out of a hunting and fishing trip into the area Thomas H. Iles. In Middle Park near Hot Sulphur Springs, "...he was approached by three men on horseback. These men were County Commissioners....Having a school system of sorts in Middle Park and no one to run it, the Commissioners told Iles they had heard he was a college graduate and would like to give him the job."³² As the result of this, "Iles thus became the first 'County Superintendent of Schools' for...(the) area."³³

An important date in this Territorial period of Colorado's school history was also 1875—the year the State Teacher's Association was organized. This organization was dedicated to the promotion of schools and education in Colorado and the betterment of the position of teachers therein. Some idea of the hardships encountered by the members of this Association in the pursuit of better education may be discerned from a brief account of its second annual meeting held at Boulder in January, 1877:

Most participating teachers took the train line to Boulder, and while in transit there the train was caught in a blizzard. "The discomfort of spending one day and night on the railroad, the train being stopped by snow, and nothing to eat until a locomotive brought, towards morning, boxes of crackers...contributed to an experience not remembered with pleasure."³⁴ The train trip, however, was not the end of their troubles--"Arriving at Boulder, and landing on the houseless plain a mile away from town, with no person to receive or point out the way, satchels in hand, they walked that cold, weary mile before sunrise on a winter morning, and arrived at the hotel to find little room."³⁵ This situation was made even more difficult by the local citizenry: "The people of the town did not choose to entertain such guests, even when financial remuneration was offered."³⁶ The Association's Report of this meeting noted in conclusion to the tale of these hardships, "The Association has not met in Boulder since this time (1)"³⁷

Dedicated, as pioneers had to be, these teachers proceeded to carry on their important meeting, and on the eve of Colorado statehood, made the following observations:

School finance was a major topic on their agenda, and fiscal conservatism was the order of the day. They counseled against school bond issues: "Let us keep our school finances healthy, and success in common school work is assured; with a great debt comes, sure as sun-

rise, weak teachers, poor schools, apathy among the people, and death." ³⁸ In the matter of school finance and bond issues there also came under consideration the subject of public school buildings: "Beautiful buildings will never make effective schools. Our advice will not all be followed, but you and I fellow teachers, have it in our power to save for our young State hundreds of thousands of dollars within the next ten years, by taking a position against elaborate and expensive school buildings made for ornament and show rather than for use." ³⁹

Regarding the rough society in which they had to work and the circumstances under which the Territorial schools had to operate, the teachers were, however, without many illusions: "...we are to take ⁴⁰ the world as we have found it; we cannot remake it." This being the case, they nevertheless were stringent in the standards they were to apply to themselves: "The sentiment of a district made and pronounced in a few weeks or months, expressive of the excellence of the public school, is built upon unstable notions....So, with schools, no one can say they are excellent until their product has been sent out to ⁴¹ form a constituent part of the community."

These teachers, however, were not setting themselves out as initiators of public policy for the schools—they saw themselves as the tools of the communities they served: "We must not forget that the schools are the people's, not ours, and that the ultimate directive

force lies in the people, so that do we wish for reform or change, the expressed opinion of the people should precede action in school affairs."⁴²

The recognition of these necessary realities to their existence and activity did little to dampen the enthusiasm and optimism of this hardy association of teachers: "Thirty years from to-day the pupils of Colorado public schools will be the product of a people made up of the very best elements of the world, bred and trained in the purest air, and under the brightest sky of earth, surrounded by the comforts⁴³ of a plenteous civilization, without its attendant evils."

And so, with these heroic and optimistic words, the State Teacher's Association--representative of Colorado schools and educators in general--launched into the adventure of statehood.

COLORADO:
THE PRE-STATEHOOD YEARS

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COLORADO
EARLY STATEHOOD
1876-1900

By 1876 Colorado's population had grown to about one hundred thousand, and the state's settlement moved into a new phase. No longer was Colorado the raw frontier; it was now a society in development:

Mining, especially in Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties and in the San Juan country, was on a paying basis. Prosperous farming communities had been established on the irrigable lands east of the foothills....In the San Luis Valley there were a few thousand Mexican farmers and ranchers, but already Anglo-American settlers were coming in to found towns and to engage in farming....Altogether the new state could boast about eight hundred miles of railway lines.¹

The latter 1870's brought an important attraction to motivate immigration--the silver mines of Leadville. By 1880 this two-mile high city was the second-largest in the state with a population of approximately 15,000. Yet other parts of the state experienced dynamic growth due to new mining activity: Silver Cliff, Aspen, and Gunnison were the most important of these.

This increase in mining-economic activity spurred further railway construction which, in turn, stimulated other development and settlement.

"The future of Colorado looked bright in 1880: the silver mines were pouring out their flood of precious metal; real estate values were rising; on the Eastern Slope there was a narrow belt of irrigated land near the mountains, while cattle numbered by the tens of thou-

sands fattened on the grasses of the plains...."² The attraction of mining activities on the Western Slope and the introduction of the railway there had also exerted other pressures: "...the pioneers were impatiently waiting for the opening to settlement of the old Ute Reservation."³

The potential for settlement and development, however, had just begun to be tapped, and a vast state beckoned: "But rapid as had been the growth in population...the Centennial State was still sparsely settled...for each of its one hundred thousand inhabitants there was a square mile of land."⁴

On the national level, circumstances were taking place which would soon provide Colorado with large numbers of immigrants to increase the state's population considerably. In the decades after 1850 foreign immigration had slowly been on the increase. In the decade 1861-1870 it had been just over 2.3 million; 1871-1880 brought just over 2.8 million.⁵ It was during the decade of the 1880's that the United States was to experience the largest influx of foreign peoples in its history up to that time. The total was in excess of 5.2 million. The effect upon Colorado of this tremendous inflow of peoples was to come in the latter years of the decade, when these peoples had filtered through their points of origin in the east and south and pursued their aspirations for land of their own "out west."

Meanwhile circumstances in Colorado were also evolving as if in

preparation to receive this new population: "By an agreement made in 1880 the Utes abandoned, save for a fifteen mile strip in the extreme southwestern corner of the State, the reservation secured to them by the treaties of 1868 and 1873. The new treaty cleared the way for the settlement of the valleys of the Gunnison, the Grand, and the White Rivers."⁶

Similarly, on the eastern plains change was taking place: "By the eighties the day of the cattleman was passing; the day of the 'nest-ter' was coming. As the frontier was pushed farther and farther westward, and as the available land suitable for agriculture was taken up, land-hungry farmers ventured out on the less desirable lands of western Kansas and Nebraska."⁷

The "overflow" of the population shift westward was inevitable. By the early years of the '80's the eastern Colorado plains provided the necessary void to receive this population. "By 1886 the overflow⁸ from these states was making its influence felt in eastern Colorado." The crossing of these plains, both on the north and the south, by railroads provided the catalyst for the settlement which was soon to develop. Nature itself seemed to contribute to this. A period of high rainfall in the mid-1880's seemed to justify the theory that rainfall tended to increase as land was settled and put under cultivation.

Thus, "In the late eighties the outstanding development in the settlement of Colorado was the movement of farmers into the semi-arid,

non-irrigable region in the eastern part of the State.⁹ Germans, Swedes, and Dutch, along with Russians and a number of other peoples from northern Europe came to Colorado led by the promise of land which was arable through hard work. These immigrants not only contributed significantly to the growth in the population of the state, but they brought strong backs and the will to succeed, both primary requisites in the transformation of Colorado's eastern plains from unbroken prairie to productive farmland.

The decade of the 1880's had been very profitable for Colorado in human as well as economic terms: "The population of the state increased from 194,327 in 1880 to 413,249 in 1890, or well over 100 per cent."¹⁰ While approximately 40 per cent of this 1890 population was concentrated in the larger urban areas of the state, the remaining 60 per cent was rural, and it was this rural population which was responsible for some of the more intensive and productive aspects of the state's development during the period. This spread of the rural population into the previously unpopulated areas is reflected by the increase in the number of counties in the state: 24 were added from 1880 to 1890 to the already-existing 31 counties. Even more significantly, "...the number of farms had quadrupled...."¹¹ Yet other facts demonstrate the character of the growth during this decade: "...the value of assessed property in the state had trebled...railroad mileage had almost trebled, and capital invested in manufacturing had increased six fold."¹²

By the end of this decade it had become inarguable, "The state¹³ was forging rapidly ahead and the future looked promising."

The 1890's, however, was not the halcyon time that it had been expected to be as the "natural" result of developments in the '80's. The early years of the 1890's brought the most profitable period for mining operations in the state's history. Silver production amounted to over \$20,000,000 per year. National economic developments were in motion during these same years which were to change the monetary backing for U.S. currency from silver to gold. This change brought economic disaster to Colorado whose chief "product" was the minerals from its mining regions—silver in particular. Late spring and early summer, 1893 brought about an avalanche in the price of silver—and both Colorado and the nation as a whole went into depression.

On the eastern plains other negative developments were taking place: "Summers of extreme drought succeeded the seasons of abundant rainfall. Crops shriveled and died, as hot dry winds scorched the prairie. A second, a third season of drought brought disaster and financial ruin to the dry farmers."¹⁴

In addition to these problems, the effects of the national depression contributed more difficulty. Suddenly the promise of the '80's seemed very far away. The new settlers on the eastern plains were confronted by almost impossible challenges. "Many deserted their homesteads and left the state. The young, recently-hopeful towns dwindled in size until whole counties were almost depopulated. The future

looked dark for the farmer on the plains.¹⁵"

Colorado was not entirely deserted by the hard-working and dedicated farmers and miners, and many determined to continue working and wait out the hard times in the hopes that things would sooner or later have to get better. By the end of the decade, and the turn of the century, the overall impact of the changes and development of the state could be assessed: "Despite the losses through migration from the state during the hard times of 1893-95 the population showed an increase of 30 per cent over that of 1890, the figure rising from 413,249¹⁶ to 539,700.¹⁷" Even more telling about the efforts and dedication of the immigrants and homesteaders on the eastern plains were the facts that, "During the decade the farms of the state had doubled their irrigated¹⁷ acreage, the value of livestock on the farms...more than doubled."

Education and the schools in Colorado also underwent some significant changes between statehood and the turn of the century. The Colorado Constitution included a number of provisions regarding education. Initially, the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction was created with the following duties:

He shall decide all points touching the construction of the school laws, which may be submitted to him in writing by any school officer, teacher, or other person in the state, and his decisions shall be held to be correct and final until set aside....He shall have general supervision of all county superintendents of the public schools of the state. He shall prepare and have printed... laws relating to the schools. He shall furnish blanks, forms, registers, courses of study, and pamphlets as shall be necessary....

He is ex officio state librarian....He apportions the public school income fund....He acts as chairman of the state board of education and chairman of the state board of examiners.¹⁸

While this office of State Superintendent was established with a highly egalitarian point of view (in that school laws could be submitted by "any school officer, teacher, or other person in the state"), it was also somewhat overloaded with non-school matters (the duties of state librarian and chairman of the state board of examiners).

At the same time the Constitution also provided for the office of County Superintendent of Schools:

(He shall)...exercise a careful supervision over the schools of his county...Make an annual report to the state superintendent of public instruction...examine the accounts of the district officers to see if such accounts are properly kept and all district funds properly accounted for...keep in a good and substantial bound book a record of his official acts and all other matters required by law to be recorded...obey the legal instructions and decisions of the superintendent of public instruction.¹⁹

These offices were, for all intents and purposes, the replicas of their Territorial counterparts.

The matter of school financing was also taken up in the Constitution: When Colorado was admitted to the Union...the federal government retained large areas of land...within the boundaries of the new state for its own use. In lieu of these, through its Land Board...Colorado was entitled to select section for section, against the area withheld,²⁰ any land it so desired from the public domain.²⁰ This land selected from the public domain and the income derived from it "...were to ac-

crue to the benefit of the schools in perpetuity." ²¹ It was also indicated that "...the several grants of land made by Congress to the state shall be judiciously located and carefully preserved." ²² This intended boon to the public schools in the new state was expected to provide more than sufficient funds for school support as the state's agricultural and mineral development transformed the raw land into income-producing assets. It would not be until after the turn of the century that the results of this generosity would be discovered.

Carried over also from the Territorial legislative acts was the confidence in the district plan of organization for the state public school system. This confidence derived not only from the experience of eastern states in implementing and utilizing this system for many years, but also from the belief that such a localized unit of organization would provide for a maximum of local control. Behind this was the rationale that, "Populations were small and the school was a community undertaking. The school reflected the simplicity of the life of the people it served." ²³

Under this district plan for school organization, the circumstances were outlined under which public schools could be established: "A half-dozen families were permitted to meet together and to form a school district. They then elected a board of school directors or school trustees to represent them, voted to levy a school tax on property of the people within the district, to erect a schoolhouse and to employ a teacher." ²⁴ Although certain weaknesses may have been foreseen in this

system of school organization, it was generally considered to be the most advantageous given the situation in which it was to be applied: "...the district system was a simple and democratic means for providing schools for the children of the people under pioneer conditions. Where economic conditions are uniform and underdeveloped, population sparse, communication difficult, educational ideas rather primitive and supervision lacking, the system is...of most importance."²⁵

In the administration of the school district, the local school board was the center of control:

The boards of the various districts are elected by the people, and they 'shall have control of instruction in the public schools of their respective districts.' They are (to be) composed of honest, sincere, capable citizens serving without pay. The constitution and the statutes have given them almost unlimited powers. (Further) The school board has the responsibility of keeping the public informed as to the school's progress, as well as its needs. It should have an efficient method for the selection of teachers and should adopt a long-time building program with the consent of the community.²⁶

Within this legal and organizational framework, then, circumstances were set out for the further development of the Colorado public school system.

Growth in population, economic development, and the resultant quickening of interest in local schools brought about changes in the character of the districts themselves. The first school districts were often very large, but as time passed and the population patterns changed, these early, larger districts were divided up--in much the

same way as happened with the large early county structure—into
smaller, more manageable political and demographic units.²⁷

In regard to public school attendance, at the outset of state-
hood, in 1876, Colorado passed a compulsory attendance law.²⁸

To put these legal, historical, and social developments and circumstances into perspective, some closer examination of a single county's activities will be outlined from the time of its earliest beginnings in the Territorial period through statehood up to 1900. Such a description and analysis will provide insight both into the realities of such an undertaking on the frontier and after, and also into the early years of one of the largest rural school counties in the state.

Weld County was one of the first handful of counties established by the Territorial government in 1861. It was a huge geographical area and, as time went on, was divided up to form the entirety or portions of several other, later counties—one of which was Logan County.

Weld County's first Superintendent of Schools was appointed in early April, 1863. Superintendent Peter Winne served in his office for a total of 34 days, acting as both County Assessor and Superintendent of Schools, for which he was paid \$124.25. During his term of office nine individual school districts were established in Weld County (none of which fell into the area which was later to become Logan County). "Three of these were formed the first year, one of which is described as embracing 'all the settlements between district number

one for two miles width on both sides of the stream down to the eastern boundary of Sam Foreman's claim.²⁹ Little more is recorded either about Mr. Winne's activities in office or the details of the individual early school districts.

The second County Superintendent in Weld County served a full term of two years without compensation, but the history of his tenure has gone unrecorded.

In 1868 the third County Superintendent took office: "...Daniel J. Fulton, reported ten districts formed, sixty-one persons of school age in the entire county, and \$2,000 appropriated for school purposes."³⁰

The first school district organized in what later became Logan County had its inception on September 13, 1873. It was numbered as Weld County District Number 22 and included, "...all that part of Township 6 North, Range 53 West, and Townships 5 and 6 North, Range 54 West, lying on the south side of the Platte River."³¹ (Although portions of this school district fell into what later became Logan County, the majority of its area fell into what later became Washington County.) This new school district was apparently very sparsely populated as may be presumed from the district school census which was taken in 1874: "Number of children between the ages of five and twenty-one, male 5, female 7."³²

School probably did not begin in this district until 1875. That fall classes began and the following report was made: "Persons between the ages of 5 and 21, male 5 female 12; average daily atten-

dance, male 6 (?), female 6."³³ That year classes were conducted by a lady teacher who received \$20 a month for her services. The school term was sixty days.

In the matter of district finance, "The entire amount apportioned for the district was paid to the teacher, no other expense being necessary for operating the school."³⁴ The district entailed no expenses for the operation of a school building as it owned none. School was held in a local ranch home.

The second Weld County school district which later fell into Logan County was organized in October, 1873 as District Number 24. No classes were taught there, however, until 1875 when the school census counted a total of 23 persons between 5 and 21. This district's first teacher was Emma Eubanks.

District Number 30 was organized in August of 1875 as including "All that part of Weld County lying on the north side of the Platte River and between Pawnee and Cedar Creeks."³⁵ Within this district fell the first community of Sterling--later to be called "Old Sterling."

The first teacher in District 30 later recalled,

Our school opened the 25th of...October, with 20 pupils, whose ages ranged from four to twenty years. The building or rather room, about 14 x 16, was made of adobe...and had been built by Mr. B.G. Smith on his homestead....We had a dirt floor, but a good shingled roof. A small iron stove stood in the center of the room. The teacher and the 'big girls' took turns sweeping up after school. Each pupil furnished his or her own seat...

a long slanting board was placed along one side of the room, with a pine bench of equal length in front of it for use during the writing period.³⁶

The new teacher was 15 years and two months old.

School was not only held in these rough-hewn surroundings, but a literary society and the first Sunday school in the area also found home there.

In the summer of the following year, 1876, "...a very comfortable school house was built...."³⁷ In description, however, this "comfortable" school does not sound too different from the original: "This was sod with plank floor, a good roof, and fairly comfortable benches for seats. Here we held our church services, school 'exhibitions', and all public gatherings."³⁸

This teacher outlined the later years of her tenure in District 30: "I taught in the sod school house until the spring of 1881, finishing the term after my mother had moved to her claim in the new Sterling, riding back and forth on horseback."³⁹

The establishment of the new Sterling community necessitated alterations in the school district: "...many of the farmers moved to the new center. Naturally the school followed. In the upper story of what was then known as the Propst building...we opened school and held one session."⁴⁰

Frontier school on the eastern Colorado plains was not without its adventures, as the teacher and students of the new Sterling school

soon discovered. One day early in the school term, "About noon a heavy wind came up, moving the building from the foundation, and blowing down the chimney. Panic reigned among the children, but we got them all out safely, and sent them home."⁴¹ In light of the possible dangers of such windstorms and the damage the first had caused, classes were moved into a nearby "dugout."

Construction began on a new schoolhouse in town to replace the damaged storebuilding (and dugout) the summer of 1881 and was ready for the fall session. That summer, however, school continued to be held in the dugout. When this new schoolhouse opened another teacher was hired, and two teachers, Miss Carrie Ayres and Mr. P.A. Moir, held sway over the educational system of Sterling until spring, 1885.

"The new school building which was a frame structure consisted of three rooms, two on the first floor and one large room above. The upper room was for a time rented to the Knights of Pythias for a lodge room, school being conducted on the first floor."⁴² Salaries for the teachers were from \$55 to \$85 depending upon the teacher's experience and time in the district.

As these events had been taking place in and around Sterling, additional school districts were springing into existence around the county:

In May, 1877 School District Number 12 was formed at Sarinda.

"The ballot box remained open from 9:15 A.M. till 12:30 P.M. Upon counting the ballots it was found that nine ballots were cast, all for the formation of the new district.⁴³" There were ten school-age children in the new district.

The next year District Number 34 was organized in the area of later Logan County and, although it was formed, the school board and its officers elected, no school was ever set up. In 1880 this district was annulled. In two years it was again organized and apparently went into operation at last.

As Superintendent for Weld County, it was Mr. Oliver Howard's responsibility to visit each of the county districts periodically. The progress of one such tour in 1878 has been recorded: The Superintendent set out with the mail carrier for the area to accompany him on a route from Greeley to Julesburg to visit "...the three schools in the South Platte Valley...."⁴⁴ After a change of horses at the community of Corona and passing by some sizeable herds of sheep, they finished their first day on the road in a rainstorm. That night the sojourners slept in the mail wagon.

The next morning they continued on their way until they came to South Platte. "Miss Isom was just opening school at eight o'clock at the famous American Ranch...."⁴⁵ This site had been the scene of a Sioux and Cheyenne Indian attack only eleven years earlier in which all the white people there had been killed—except for one woman who

was carried away into captivity. Regarding this, the Superintendent noted, "The unsophisticated may imagine that the teacher dispensed wisdom with a primer in one hand and rifle in the other; that each of the 14 pupils carried his revolver in a belt, etc., but such is not the case."⁴⁶ Notwithstanding the site of the school and the possibility of imminent danger, Mr. Howard reported his observations on this little schoolhouse on the edge of the frontier: "The routine of school work went on as unsuspiciously as could be.... Although the accommodations are poor, the children seem to be making progress. One can hardly imagine anything more uncomfortable in this sultry weather than sitting huddled together on low forms. But a new school house is expected."⁴⁷

After Mr. Howard completed his inspection of the American Ranch school, he and the mail carrier forded the South Platte and set out for Sarinda. At the school there, "...Miss Emma Martin teaches eight pupils in a very acceptable manner. The reading, considering the age of the children, was unusually good."⁴⁸

Here the Superintendent discovered that the third school he was to visit had been dismissed, so he decided to return to Greeley with his inspection tour incomplete—but having accomplished the incredible record of "...having gone nearly fifty miles a day on an average."⁴⁹

The 1880's accounted for the organization of a number of additional school districts in the area:

District 54 in Eliff was organized in May, 1885 upon the casting of nine positive votes.

District 60 in Atwood was organized in April, 1886 upon the casting of six votes. The new district included a total of 20 children of school age.

District 62 in Crook was organized in June, 1886 on the casting of fourteen votes. Ten children of school age were enumerated.

District 66 was organized in July, 1886.

Peets District Number I was organized in June, 1887.

Proctor District Number 50 was established in March of 1888 on the casting of 23 votes. In this district were 16 children of school age, 10 males and 6 females.

West Plains District Number 56 began in March, 1888 on the casting of 11 votes, and its school-age population consisted of 16 females and 6 males.

Fleming District Number 69 was organized July, 1889 on twenty votes. It contained 36 persons of school age.

By 1887 Sterling was progressing with its own schools: "May 5th of this year the railroad company surveyed the Colorado and Wyoming road through Sterling, the line running through the school yard and making the removal of the school building to another location ne-

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cessary." This situation called for both school board and community action. A meeting of the voters of the school district was called to consider the purchase of another site in Sterling for the school. "It was moved...and seconded...that 'we proceed to vote by ballot the following question: That said block be purchased for the sum of \$650.00, provided that M.C. King and S.R. Propat furnish \$300.00 of the purchase price.' The vote was unanimous in favor of the proposition and the block was purchased."⁵¹

Yet another important event took place in 1888 which marked the beginning of a transition from sporadic frontier schooling to a more modern and comprehensive school system—something which was also taking place in other rural areas around the state. Early that summer a special meeting of the directors of the Sterling school district was called, to which school board members from other districts nearby were invited to attend. The purpose of this meeting was "...to consider the advisability of establishing a high school."⁵²

Upon such consideration at the meeting, steps were undertaken to organize and set up this high school to serve Sterling and surrounding local districts. At the next meeting a principal was selected for the new school—"...W.E. Wheeler, who at the time was pastor of the M.E. Church, south...."⁵³ Two weeks later the contract for the construction of the new high school building was granted to the highest bidder at \$5,937. The lot for the school was donated by M.C. King.

"Just three months from the time the project was initiated the high school opened."⁵⁴ It was named the Broadway School and served the territory north of Main Street, designated as Ward 2. This new high school had employed as its only staff member the aforesaid Mr. Wheeler, who served as both teacher and principal--for which he was paid \$100 monthly. (This building later became Logan County High School.)

By school year 1886-87 the Sterling school (christened Franklin) had grown to require the services of a principal and two teacher-assistants: "The board of directors...voted that for the lower grades female teachers should be employed."⁵⁵ In 1887-88 the Franklin principal was paid \$90 per month, teachers \$55 per month.

In October, 1889 the first special teacher in the Sterling schools was hired to instruct grade school music.

By the end of the high school's first year of operations in 1889 it was proudly announced "...that ten of the high school students passed the teachers' examination (for grade advancement) and received certificates that year...."⁵⁶ However, for unrecorded reasons, "At the beginning of this year the salaries of grade teachers...were reduced to \$50.00."⁵⁷ 1890 brought a raise from \$50 to \$60 per month for these teachers who seem to have accepted the school district's financial ups and downs with an even temper.

The new high school held its first graduation exercises June 6,

1890 for four students who had successfully completed its course.

Their class motto was "Labor Conquers All Things."

"The census of 1890 shows 1,104 persons of school age in Logan County, 900 enrolled, of which 37 were in high school. There were at that time 30 school houses in the county with a property valuation of \$33,000.00."⁵⁸

The 1891 graduating class of the high school consisted of one student, John M. King, who later became a Colorado State Senator.

In 1892 and 1893 there were no students graduated from the high school, however in 1894 there were ten—6 female and 4 male; 1895, 4 graduates—3 female, 1 male; 1896, 5 graduates—3 female, 2 male.

"In 1897 there were no graduates, the high school board having ruled that all graduates be required to pass the county teachers examination, and all failed to meet the requirement."⁵⁹ 1898 brought 8 graduates—6 female, 2 male; 1899, 9 graduates—8 female, 1 male; 1900, 8 graduates—4 female, 4 male.

As the Sterling high school had become an important educational institution which occasionally drew its students from beyond the immediately surrounding area, county officials and residents came to the decision that further development was necessary in the school's jurisdiction, its scope, and its tax valuation area: "On November 6, 1900, an election was held to decide whether or not the high school should be made a county institution. The vote was 358 to 96 in fa-

vor of the change.*⁶⁰ Thus, Logan County High School became one of the first county high schools in the state.

This brief chronological analysis of the growth and development of the Logan County public schools, from Territorial times to the turn of the century, may be taken as typical of rural and county school systems throughout the state during this same time period. Established from the most rudimentary beginnings incident to the early settlement of the frontier, the Logan County schools developed through the later Territorial stage with growing numbers of isolated school districts across the landscape, into the early statehood period with an increasing organizational and population focus and, finally, the development of a full-scale educational enterprise in and of itself serving a considerable area of settlement and agricultural and commercial endeavor.

With this example of Logan County taken as the macrocosm, let us now move to another part of the state, deep in the mountains of the western slope, during the same time period, to examine the microcosm of pre-1900 rural school development in Colorado.

As the gold and silver-bearing lodes were traced farther and farther into the heart of the Rockies themselves, civilization followed, but its progress was often delayed due to the characteristics of the land itself and the people who explored and populated it: "The population was made up principally of venturesome young unmarried men who

had come west to make their fortunes. Owing to the poor railroad facilities...and poor accommodations in these new towns...⁶¹ school children and the schools themselves came slower than they had on the eastern plains.

Lake City, situated in what is now Hinsdale County, was founded in 1875.⁶² From the very beginning in this small mining town interest in education was high. As an early issue of the Silver World announced, "A school is the greatest necessity here at present."⁶³ Another editorial in the same publication heralded, "Some movement should be inaugurated to erect a commodious schoolhouse and procure a teacher. Nothing speaks loudly for the enterprise and permanency of a new town than a well regulated public school."⁶⁴

Late that same year a reasonably-priced private school was established in Lake City, but this was not a satisfactory response to the educational needs of the general public. As funds existed in the county coffers earmarked for school use, it was quickly suggested by the Silver World, and followed by a petition to that effect, that an independent school be established for the community. Early 1876 saw the organization of the local school district and the subscription of additional funds to supplement county funds. A store building was rented for the school, funds raised, a teacher hired, and the free public school was opened on January 10, 1876: "It had four rooms downstairs and two upstairs which were used for lawyers' offices. The

first teacher was W.A. McGinnis. His salary was fifty-five dollars
a month.⁶⁵

Public response to the new school was strong, and 28 students were enrolled that first term. Courses offered were the traditional grade school curriculum: spelling, reading, geography, mental arithmetic, and bookkeeping. Not only was the parents' responses positive, but the students themselves demonstrated by high attendance their interest in education: "Of the twenty-eight, ten were listed as perfect
in attendance during the first eight weeks period."⁶⁶

Before the end of the first eight-week session another citizens' meeting was held and the school board decided it had been such a success that the following year's term would be six months. The school census for 1876, "...showed 103 persons between six and twenty-one years
of age in the district, and sixty-one under six years."⁶⁷ School that next year was scheduled to begin on November 1, but due to the fact that insufficient funds (only \$700) had been collected in the school treasury to pay for the full year, a benefit supper and ball was announced for November 10, sponsored by the ladies of the community. Meanwhile another building was rented to house the school and teacher's examinations were scheduled. Of the five applicants examined, two were selected, Mrs. Eugenia W. Olney and Colonel C.W. Adams.

The third year of public education in Lake City brought with it a variety of problems: Due to slow tax collections the school treasury

ran dry in January, 1877, and the teacher's salaries went unpaid.

"Also, the temporary and inadequate housing (of the school)...was not satisfactory. Poor heating and ventilation, plus leaking roofs were not conducive to good classroom work."⁶⁸

The educational enterprise in Lake City was clearly not operating in the best form--and at the base of its problems were finances. "There was no money in the school treasury, but arrangements had been made to advance money for teachers' salaries. Hard times were offered as the reason for slow tax payments."⁶⁹

After considerable community discussion it was generally agreed that a schoolhouse must be built, and the means by which this could be accomplished--and the district's financial situation could be solved at the same time--was a bond issue. This plan was facilitated by the fact that a local man had already donated 75 lots in town to the school district to establish its building fund.

It was not until 1880, however, that the bond issue of \$16,500 was presented for public approval. The issue carried by a vote of 60 to 15. Accordingly the following resolution was issued from a public meeting of interested townspeople:

Resolved by the voters of this school meeting held June 15, 1880, in District 1, Hinsdale County, that the board of Directors thereof is hereby directed to purchase the site selected by us this night, and to negotiate the bonds of said District at a price not less than 90 cents and proceed at once to let contracts for the erection of the school house on such plans and terms as may be thought best for the interest of this District.⁷⁰

The new Lake City schoolhouse was to be a building the entire community and county could be proud of, and to assure this an architect of some distinction was selected—Denverite Robert S. Roschlaub. "He had designed the Boston Building (in Denver), the Equitable Building, one of Denver's most distinctive business blocks, and a number of public school buildings."⁷¹ Most significantly, Mr. Roschlaub had designed the Central City Opera House only three years before.

When the drawings came back it was clearly evident that the community's expectations had been met: "...a two-story structure of stone, with a full basement. Two large rooms on the main floor were planned to accommodate fifty-six desks each. The second floor was to have three rooms, one accommodating 110 desks, and two smaller recitation rooms."⁷² Although the exact reason is unclear—more than likely financial—"These specifications were not carried out...the building is of brick..."⁷³ and other variations appeared. Further, with the basement left temporarily unfinished, the cost of this structure was estimated at \$12,000. Town lots were purchased and the bids were opened.

Since the intention had been for this new building to solve school housing problems for the fall term, the winning bid was selected without delay—and construction begun forthwith. Through the summer and a mild fall work progressed. The cornerstone-laying ceremony took place October 16, 1880 before a large audience of townspeople and county re-

sidents. "The program included vocal music by the children and a (Masonic) Lodge quartet, an address by Professor W.G.B. Lewis, the school principal, and the Masonic Service for laying a cornerstone." 74

In the haste to complete the building, however, planning for the necessary adjacent facilities was overlooked--but the Silver World soon took notice of this, and in the most euphemistic of terms: "The attention of the School Board is called to the lack of terminal facilities in connection with the new schoolhouse. They should have a privy council and take measures for the erection of necessary structural adjuncts contiguous to the temple of learning on Gunnison Avenue." 75

It was not until fall, 1881, however, that classes actually began in the new building as the interior finish work took considerably longer than expected. The principal was A.R. Joab, and teacher were Mrs. A.R. Wright and Miss Vashti Liggett, and 107 students were enrolled to pursue their studies.

School had not been in session long when a floor support gave away. Although no one was injured, "This resulted in a rumor that the building had been poorly constructed. Parents became alarmed for the safety of their children and kept them home. Attendance...dropped from fifty to thirteen." 76 Community tempers flared and it was demanded that the school be closed completely. "The school board was unwilling to disrupt school" and refused to comply with the demand. An

inspection was made, and the one weak support was discovered and replaced." ⁷⁷ The inspection and repair work seemed to take care of the problem to everyone's satisfaction as attendance at school returned to normal and the year was completed without incident.

By fall term, 1882 the school had become recognized as a point of pride throughout the county. "The Silver World observed that Lake City had one of the best disciplined and most interesting schools in the state." ⁷⁸ The school had enrolled over 100 pupils. In addition to the influence of the building, the school's principal and teachers were given credit for this achievement: A.E. Joab was "...described as 'a thorough scholar' who possessed 'knowledge of human nature and the ability to successfully govern, direct, and control with firmness and kindness.' Miss Lizzie Tallman, intermediate and primary instructor, had over seventy in her department. 'She has perfect control over them.'" ⁷⁹ The newspaper spoke for the community: "The Silver World is proud of Lake City's school. We congratulate pupils, teachers, and parents." ⁸⁰

Principal A.E. Joab made a lasting impression on those early days in the Lake City school, as many of his fellows did in their own particular schools and communities. As he was remembered many years later by one of his former students,

...a young Yale graduate. I shall never forget his first session. We were called to order by the ringing of a medium sized hand bell. Our former teachers did this in a slow, weary way; but this morning was different. We looked up from our play in

amazement at a tall, red-headed young man, walking briskly up and down, vigorously ringing that bell; we had never dreamed there was so much 'ring' in it. Our school life was changed from then on.

Mr. Joab was a wonderful educator, but a wild disciplinarian; we received an educational foundation from him that was priceless. He was very thorough and intense in his desire for us to excell. Some hated him; I did not, but I was afraid of him....True, he had several encounters with big brothers; but, outside of a few bruises, he escaped all harm.⁸¹

Professor Joab apparently also had some rather liberated ideas of education for his day, for during the trial of Alford Packer, the "Colorado Cannibal" judged guilty of eating up "half the Democrats in Hinsdale County,"⁸² he took one of his more advanced classes to visit the court. As one of these students later remembered, "...some of her companions told her they overheard Packer ask, 'Who was that nice, fat, juicy young girl who sat near me yesterday?'"⁸³

Professor Joab was a beacon light in Lake City education only until 1883, however, when his calling to his profession took him to the superintendency of the Colorado Springs public schools--and later chairmanship of the Mathematics Department of Chicago University.

During the mid-1880's the course of education in Lake City went smoothly, with school enrollments usually in excess of 100. 1885 was marked by the expansion of the school curriculum with the addition of physics, algebra, geology, and history.

By the early 1890's the number of graduates was increasing and the need was growing for secondary schooling in Lake City. At first a home-

study arrangement was created, but this did not prove satisfactory. Finally, monies were appropriated to finish off the top floor of the school building for use as a secondary school--so, in 1893, three rooms were added to the educational establishment in Lake City.

"The first annual commencement of Lake City's upper school was held in the Armory, Friday, May 6, 1898, at 8 P.M. A fifteen cent admission charge was made to defray expenses. Many townspeople came to hear a program of violin solos, recitations, class prophesy, and addresses by school officials.⁸⁴"

There were only a handful of Negroes living in Lake City between 1876 and 1900, and one Negro boy graduated from the school in the 1890's.

Even with the addition of the secondary school, by 1900 the Lake City education system still only went as far as the tenth grade. In that year educator H.G. Heath, later Hinsdale County Superintendent of Schools and County Treasurer, was hired to enlarge the secondary school through the twelfth grade, which he successfully completed a short time later.

This brief relation of the schools in Lake City provides some insight into the developments, problems, circumstances, and personalities incident to the establishment and evolution of a single frontier school district during the early years of Colorado's statehood.

The course of this development was also revealed in the Biennial Reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In the Report for 1885-1886 several subjects of key importance were discussed:

Under the heading "School Houses" it was pointed out that, "... there have been erected during the past two years 106 school houses. Some of these have been built with reference to the comfort, convenience and health of the pupils, while others have not."⁸⁵

"Teachers"—"At no time in the history of the State have we had a greater supply of excellent teachers than now. There is a constant influx of teachers from all parts of the Union....Those coming to Colorado for the purpose of teaching must make up their minds to take their chances, for the supply is greater than the demand."⁸⁶

"Free Text Books"—"There is a strong and growing sentiment...in favor of school districts purchasing and owning the text books....It will require but little change in the law to bring this relief...."⁸⁷

The State Superintendent also saw fit to comment in regard to "Temperance Instruction"—"A great deal of interest is shown by the people in different parts of the country in relation to temperance instruction in the public schools....Should not Colorado take some steps in this direction? Many of the people...are asking for some action in this matter, and the Legislature should give the subject serious consideration."⁸⁸

The next Biennial Report, for 1887-1888, commented on a similar series of subjects:

"School Houses"—

During the past year there have been built in the State one hundred and thirty-four school houses. Many of these buildings have been constructed with reference to style, convenience and comfort, and are a credit to the communities in which they are

located....There is no reason for school boards making mistakes in the construction of school buildings in these days, when the most approved plans may be had and considered at a small cost.⁸⁹

"Teachers"—

Colorado has always been an attractive spot to teachers, not only because the wages paid are better than in the States east of us, but because of our excellent climate and beautiful mountain scenery. Hundreds of teachers who lost their health in the Middle or Eastern States have come here and regained it. Many such teachers are doing good work in our schools now, but the number of our schools is limited, and the numbers that come every year seem to be unlimited; hence the supply is greater than the demand.⁹⁰

"Free Text-Books"—"The last Legislature amended the school law so as to permit school districts to purchase and own the text-books for the use of all the children in the schools. Quite a number of the districts in the State have already availed themselves of this provision...."⁹¹

Yet other topics were coming to the fore in the latter years of the 1880's: "School Enrollment"—

In some counties the per cent. of enrollment...is very good, while in others it is entirely too low. In Boulder and El Paso counties...the enrollment of the school population...is 78 per cent., while in Huerfano it is only 42 per cent....The enrollment for the whole State is 66 per cent...which shows an increase of 3 per cent. in the last two years; but still a larger enrollment is desirable.⁹²

"School Libraries"—"By virtue of the present law any school board can levy a tax of one-tenth of a mill for library purposes.... But up to this time but a few districts have availed themselves of building up a library. I trust the importance of good reference li-

braries for all of our schools will not be overlooked by the school
boards."⁹³

By the 1899-1900 Biennial Report certain of these same topics were treated, while others had become equally important:

"Teachers"—"With our normal and high schools turning out annually many aspirants to the teachers' profession, and with an ever-increasing immigration of excellent teachers from other states, there is no longer any reason for accepting poorly qualified teachers in any school district in Colorado. The standard of requirements has for some
94
years past been gradually rising."

"School Libraries"—"In nearly every county a majority of the districts, rural as well as those of the towns, have taken steps to establish such libraries in connection with the public school, and although in many instances the beginning is small, the growth is steady, and already the influence is noticeable upon the progress and culture
95
of the pupils."

"Compulsory Education"—"The compulsory education law applicable to third-class districts sadly fails to accomplish its intended purpose....It contains a provision relieving from educational responsibility the parents of children living more than two miles from a school house....some avail themselves of the weakness of the law and permit
96
their children to grow up in utter ignorance."

***School Directors*--**

The interests of a school or school district are sometimes hampered by the refusal of a director to perform his duty.... The only way to enforce a proper discharge of his duty is through the courts, a process so expensive and unpleasant that, rather than resort to it, teachers and patrons of the school often suffer inconvenience.... A law making school directors accountable for the proper discharge of their duties to the county superintendent, and clothing that official with authority to remove, would...conduce to harmony and promote the ends of education. 97

Although a sense of some problems inherent in the state's rural schools was undoubtedly apparent prior to this 1900 Report, the State Superintendent felt it necessary to detail specific difficulties which were coming to the fore in this Report: "In arriving at the consideration of the rural school problem, I approach the heart of the whole system. It is here that we are confronted by the greatest difficulties, and here that we may do our greatest work." 98 After some further introduction outlining the importance of the rural schools in a state such as Colorado, the Superintendent detailed the most pressing problems: "The chief evils of our country schools are unequal taxation, short and unequal terms, unequal equipment, untrained and poorly paid teachers, small schools, lax supervision." Each of these problems was then explained in more detail as to their negative effects upon the educational process for rural children and the circumstances which produced them.

As remedies to these problems there was next outlined a series of suggestions which would, by the early decades of the twentieth century, become as predictable as they were deleterious to the rural educational

system which had been, in large part, responsible for the transformation of Colorado from a raw frontier territory to a progressive and stable political and economic entity: "To approach these conditions in the country, the district system must be abolished...the county (must) be made the unit of administration."⁹⁹

The outcome of this suggested change in school organization was seen as manifest: "...uniform taxation, uniform length of term, and uniform equipment...fewer and larger schools would be maintained, and remote pupils transported at public expense...higher salaries...better teachers, and supervision...."¹⁰⁰

In summation of his criticism of the rural school situation and the proposed change to benefit it, the Superintendent noted that,

It is not expected that an immediate change will be made from the district to the county unit, but it is believed that the time has come when the practicability of such a change should receive the serious and careful consideration of those interested in the betterment of our rural schools.¹⁰¹

Thus, by the turn of the century both the strengths and weaknesses of the Colorado rural educational system had become apparent, and the thoughts and trends which were to begin by the year 1900 were to continue, each in its own particular way, and in so doing importantly influence the development of rural education into the mid-twentieth century.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century in Colorado provided the economic and social framework for the development of what had, only a few years earlier been a raw frontier, into a settled, socially and culturally-conscious establishment. The schools of the day

followed this same pattern of evolution. Their first beginnings had been more the result of individual action rather than community movement. These earliest schools had usually been the result of some strong personality arriving in a locality and his supervision of a very limited school "system" there. Alternatively, a handful of residents of a locality would almost spontaneously establish a school for their children. As time went on, these local schools coalesced around the district form of organization within county jurisdictions. Under this central (and minimal) authority, the individual school districts grew and developed through the accumulation of students, construction of more substantial housing facilities, and the increase of staff to provide for expanded activities and educational services.

By the end of the nineteenth century it could truly be said that the schools and education had become a significant cultural and social force in the Rocky Mountain Region--no longer just "the frontier," but now an economic, social, and political force to be contended with in the United States as a nation.

COLORADO:
EARLY STATEHOOD
1876 - 1900

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COLORADO:
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
1900-1920

The rural school problem is a social and economic problem even more than an educational one. The rural school is inseparable from the social and economic problems of the country people. The little red schoolhouse is in a sociological setting which only the use of modern machinery and good roads can change. The development of roads and the electrification of the farm and the home undoubtedly show the way to the creation of larger school units.¹

It was an interesting development in Colorado that the country schools had no more than become established and operating as geographically numerous, responsible, self-contained local educational units, by the turn of the century, that they began to be the object of increasing criticism, emanating from larger political and educational units, in large part, as on their own and within their communities they continued to be regarded with honor and respect.

The first two decades of the twentieth century may be considered, in many ways, as the "heyday" of country school education in Colorado. By the turn of the century the majority of individual school districts were rural and their schools were functioning realities. Although more school districts were established after 1900, their number was fewer than those which had been founded before. Many of those already-established rural school districts had developed beyond the "bare bones" educational program which characterized their beginnings, and were in the process of examining and interpreting the values and significance of their particular brand of education with the objective of further

improving it. In other districts, however, little was done beyond the minimal support of the existing building and teacher.

The districts themselves had come into their own by this time on the whole and most were functioning quite efficiently and effectively in consideration of their limited financial and physical resources. It was probably during these first two decades of the twentieth century that the icon of the "little red schoolhouse" became established as an important element of the American tradition and myth. This wide acceptance into American iconography of the country schoolhouse had its genesis, of course, in reality. During that time period the urban-rural "balance" had not yet become tipped so far in the direction of the urban scale as would be the case in later decades. For this reason a large proportion of Americans who grew up in that generation did, in fact, experience country school educations.

In their looking back into their own pasts, and remembering both the fact and the romanticized vision, this generation undoubtedly does remember country schools with respect for many reasons. An important background element in this situation is the fact that it was during this time that rural districts were confronting their first serious conflicts with "urbanized" educational standards and ideals, and this situation often stimulated them to significant achievements. The teachers were, on the whole, better educated than their rural predecessors, the physical school facilities were larger, better equipped and

maintained, generally speaking, than ever before, and the educational programs themselves were improving in comparison to those commonly found in the nineteenth century.

Other forces were still bringing change to the rural environments of Colorado. The "frontier," as the term referred to large expanses of unsettled land, had not yet been entirely settled. The first two decades of the twentieth century accounted for the largest numbers of immigrants to enter the United States any time before or since. During the first decade of the century over 8.7 million immigrants from foreign shores landed in the United States; the second decade accounted for over 5.7 million.²

Differing somewhat from the waves of immigration before the turn of the century, these immigrants were predominantly from southern and eastern Europe. Further, while they were largely settling into the American industrial northeast rather than spreading westward, as their predecessors had done, their overall number was so large that, even though the percentage which moved westward for land was lower, the actual numbers of people were relatively high. "During the period 1900-1910 it is estimated that 1,290,000 immigrants settled in rural territory....During the period 1910-1920 the number of immigrants into rural territory aggregated about 754,000."³

Perhaps in response to these growing numbers of moderately-skilled immigrants and in the interest of stimulating further settlement

in the sparsely-populated areas west of the Mississippi River, the federal government passed the Homestead Act of 1913. This Act opened up vast new areas to homesteading which had previously been closed to such settlement or Indian lands. The effect of this new Homestead Act on Colorado was a second wave of settlement on the eastern plains which both initiated new rural communities and contributed to the population of those already in existence.

The general effect of this second wave upon the rural school districts was twofold: first, previously low-density populated areas increased their population density and, in so doing, placed new demands upon the school districts there. Second, they were responsible for a proliferation of school districts themselves. The results of these developments and trends were not long in making themselves felt.

Working within the framework of semi-settled rural areas, the school district provided a logical and ideal form of organization and orientation through which those more inhabited areas could provide themselves with educational facilities at a minimum cost and retain a total control over these schools. As population and settlement increased, however, the accumulation of school districts which were small and highly locally-oriented—but located adjacent to one another—took the traditional school district organization beyond its logical optimum point. The growing impracticality, from the point of view of professional educators and politicians, of this situation was made apparent

in a report on rural education in Colorado published by the University of Colorado. It was entitled "Ruralizing the City School":

Since it had always been asserted that rural schools were something of the "heartbeat" of democracy, and that their local support provided for the most effective democratic administration, the report takes this premise—"Let us ruralize the city school for administrative purposes and for the sake of making it as democratic as the country school."⁴ This "ruralization" of the country school is based upon the notion of applying the same organizational criteria to the urban school census as is applied to the rural in the establishment of local school districts.

In the average one-teacher school in the rural districts there are not to exceed a dozen families represented in each school. The average city block will not have less than about the same number of families. In order that the city may be served in the same way as the country, we shall proceed to build a one-teacher school on the corner of each block in the supposed city of 150 blocks, and elect three directors from each block whose business it would be to employ the teacher who teaches eight grades....⁵

Thus, in this hypothetical city of 150 blocks there is established 150 separate and autonomous school "districts." The total school board members for these districts will number 450. To assure some measure of central supervision of these autonomous districts and school boards, a single city "superintendent" is appointed.

The logical questions and considerations growing out of this situation are outlined for the purpose of demonstrating the problems and

difficulties inherent in the district system of school organization as populations increase and reasonably-dense settlement becomes an established fact:

Now, Mr. City Superintendent, please tell us how you would manage this situation efficiently although your schools are distributed over a very small area compared with that of an entire county. If you were to have ten buildings in your school district would you think it necessary to have three directors for each building...? In a system of schools is it essential to have three directors, with power to control the expenditures of money, for each school plant in the city?⁶

A final question sums up the body of those which were arising in the minds of Colorado educators at the time: "Is the present rural school system a necessity for twentieth century conditions or does it hark back to pioneer days when our forefathers were blazing trails of industry and education?"⁷

To further clarify this position, the report pointed out, "...the absurdity of it all and the striking likeness to our present system in (rural)...districts may furnish a new angle...for thought.... County superintendents...are confronted with the problem....However capable, the handicaps under which they work are sure to interfere in a marked degree with any program for improving the instruction and supervision of schools."⁸

This analysis from the University of Colorado, however, had not been the first call to recognize rural school problems. In her Report for the years 1909-1910 the State Superintendent of Public Instruction Katherine M. Cook had also outlined an alternate view of the situation:

Permit me to say...that, in my judgement, we have much to do; in fact, we have hardly begun to work out a satisfactory system of education for our children in this State....a large percentage of our children have very inadequate facilities for obtaining an education. They attend school in badly equipped and unsanitary buildings, in charge of poorly paid, untrained and incompetent teachers.⁹

Behind this circumstance in the state's rural school districts the State Superintendent saw two significant factors, one economic and one organizational: First, "We have been so absorbed in keeping abreast of the times commercially, that we have neglected to do so educationally; and, in view of the vast changes during the recent years, in the social,¹⁰ economic and industrial life of the community..." the development of education has generally been ignored. Second, a great majority of rural school children "...are taught by untrained and inexperienced teachers, with no supervision except that furnished by the county superintendent of schools. Under present conditions, in this State, it is a physical impossibility for many county superintendents to visit the¹¹ schools in their counties more than once a year."

Of these two circumstances contributing to the poor state of most rural education, the weaknesses of the county superintendent system was found to be the more culpable: the geographical expanse of most counties mitigated against effective supervision by this officer, low salaries paid to county superintendents acted to discourage the more able and capable people to fill the office, and the fact of their political appointive character further complicated the possibility of

obtaining candidates to fill the office with the required educational experience and backgrounds.

Superintendent Cook also saw that some of the problems of the rural education system of the state as the result of illogical and misguided thought regarding its realities and existence: "...the rural schools have been sadly neglected. They have received very little attention from organized educational authority, and the rural school has been allowed to become a sort of poor imitation of the city school."¹²

The remedy, for Superintendent Cook, was clear—but not so easily achieved—"What we need is not a rural school modeled after the city school, but a system which will educate country people for the country as successfully as city schools educate city people for the city."¹³

While idealistic, her vision of rural education was not unrealistic—"We need the kind of country schools that dignify and not belittle country life; that breathe the atmosphere of country life; that create a love for the country; and that teach in terms of country life, which the country child understands."¹⁴

Contributing to the growing divergence, both in thought and reality, between the urban and rural school districts in Colorado was the already existing state district classification scheme:

Districts containing a school population of one thousand or more shall be denominated districts of the first (1st) class; districts containing a school population of less than one thousand (1,000) and more than three hundred and fifty (350) shall be denominated districts of the second (2nd) class; and districts containing a

school population of three hundred and fifty (350) or less shall be denominated districts of the third class.¹⁵

Some statistics for Colorado during this period will provide a better awareness of the scope and scale of its rural education: By 1913, "There were 1725 third class school districts...and of this only 289 had less than fifteen children of school age....2618 children lived in those districts....While...there are 194 districts each of which had an average census...of more than 100 children. These districts had a combined census of 31,251....¹⁶" Further, "Twenty-one of the sixty counties have no districts except those of the third class. ...Nineteen thousand, one hundred twenty-seven children, or almost 25¹⁷ per cent of the census live in these twenty-one counties."

"It was after 1900 that rural school improvement became an active¹⁸ program in the State of Colorado." Reform of third class rural school districts in Colorado took two major forms: centralization and consolidation.

The simplest and most direct of these reform movements was that of centralization. "A centralization of schools in Colorado means the abolishing of several smaller schools in the same district and the building of a larger school centrally located."¹⁹ The centralization of a school district, thus, was an intra-district re-organization and re-allocation of facilities for the objective of their better and more efficient utilization within the confines of the district for the benefit of the school patrons in that district.

The second approach to school district reform was more revolutionary--consolidation. Consolidation provides "...for the abolishment of certain adjoining districts lying within the boundaries of one county or contiguous counties and their reorganization into one special school district...for the conveyance of pupils to a consolidated school...."²⁰ Consolidation represented an inter-district reorganization and re-allocation of the facilities of several districts for their mutual improvement and benefit.

While centralization was most commonly provided for through a decision of the district school board and carried out by the school administrative personnel within that district, the more revolutionary consolidation required special political arrangements for the conjoining of autonomous school districts. Once established as a likely alternative for school district reorganization, the question of consolidation had to be submitted to tax-payer approval: "The school boards of two or more adjoining school districts may submit the question of consolidation and on the petition of not less than one-fourth of the qualified electors of each of such school districts..."²¹ the consolidation may take place.

Legislation and increasing interest in the reform of rural, third class school districts became an important issue in Colorado even before the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Initial state legislation in this regard was passed in 1909. However, the fact that such legislation was on the books was not significant motive

for local school districts to spontaneously contemplate their disintegration and subsequent reintegration with adjoining, and possibly rival, school districts. To promote consolidation a statewide analysis of rural schools and school districts was begun, the objective of which was the demonstration of the need for this form of solution to the problems confronting rural school district education. The first of these reports was published in 1913:

Entitled The Rural and Village Schools of Colorado--An Eight Year Survey..., this report began with an interpretation of the third class district as a key entity in Colorado rural education--

The third-class school district is the unit of organization that our people have provided for the training of the children of the villages and of the open country of Colorado in the rudiments of reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography and economics, for fitting those who have completed the prescribed course of study for entering the high school, and for giving all some understanding of the duties, privileges and responsibilities of American citizenship.²²

What is interesting about this interpretation of the third class district is its patronizing tone and the inherent assumption that third class districts, aside from their legal distinction from an objective standpoint, are, by definition, lesser in quality of education as well as in quantity of students. This initial comprehension of third class districts is carried throughout the report.

In the introductory pages of this report it is noted that several states had already completed similar analyses of their rural schools, which analyses have resulted in changes in these systems: "The more

carefully the subject is studied and the more thorough the investigation, the worse conditions are found to be!"²³

The first section of the report is concerned with the size of third class school district census figures in the state (portions of which have been included above). At the lowest end of this scale, "One district was found that had but three children on its census list...one year...the other seven years this independent unit...reported no children within the district, still kept its independent organization, went through the formality of electing a school director²⁴ each year, levied no taxes and spent...(no) money for education."

(While it is not pointed out as such, this example demonstrates how important the independent school district unit was felt to be by district inhabitants—even though there were no children in the district there was no interest in annulling the district or sending its children to another school—instead the district was kept in existence even though there were no children and, thus, no need for schools. As the report comments, "Evidently they were waiting for the stork to come²⁵ along and help them out of their dilemma.")

As had been indicated earlier, it was felt by many that the logical extension of the local school district concept resulted in impractical and absurd circumstances for the carrying on of efficient and effective education. In regard to the school district without an operating school or pupils, the report noted that, "They merely serve to

show the extremes to which the district system has been carried.²⁶

In examining the attendance figures for the rural third class districts, their performance was discovered to be marginal: "... the average school census of these 1725 school districts...was 82,174 ...while the average enrollment was only 64,385, or 78 per cent of the census....An average of 22 per cent did not enroll...." Further,²⁷ during the 1906-1913 period analyzed, the average enrollment figure was 64,385—but the average daily attendance figure was considerably lower than this, 39,219.

Concerning the third class grading practices, "Young and inexperienced teachers...are expected to advance all pupils a grade each year, just the same as city schools with well-trained and experienced teachers under expert supervision....They not only attempt to do it, but they actually do it at least as far as passing them to the next higher grade is concerned....(although) there is practically no supervision...."²⁸

Finally, only 14,559 (or 22 per cent) of the total enrollment actually graduated the eighth grade, accounting for 37 per cent of the total average daily attendance.

In its analysis of the length of third class school terms, it was discovered that 15 per cent of the total school census for the covered years attended in districts in counties having 160 or more days of school per year; 48 per cent of the school census were in districts

having between 130 and 140 days per year; 8 per cent attended in districts having less than 120 days of school each year. One county (Baca) required a school term of less than 100 days per year.²⁹

In regard to teachers and their salaries in third class districts a primary realization was necessary for the fullest comprehension of the data which followed: "...in these third class districts the teacher constitutes the greater part of the system...the teacher (however) can expect little help from within the district, less from the county organization, and still less from the state. Thus in actual practice the teacher stands or falls alone."³⁰ Further, "...if the teacher cannot and does not overcome the difficulties and solve the problems as they arise, the school is a failure."³¹ This significant dependence upon the teacher in the rural school places this individual in a pivotal position—not only within the school system itself, but in the political and democratic existence of the state: "...there is no person employed in this state and placed in such a difficult position as is the teacher in our rural schools—and there is no one else of whom so much is expected."³²

Notwithstanding this important role the rural school teacher is expected to fulfill with efficiency and dispatch, the actual recruitment and hiring of rural teachers was found to be directed towards the lowest common denominators of teacher training and background. Thus,

many "...teachers begin their work in the country schools without any previous experience, with no professional training, with only a high school education, and very often less, while a large number of them are but little older than their oldest pupils."³³ In the main, the fault for this situation rested, the report indicated, with the local school boards themselves: "...many school boards in these districts seem to be satisfied and content to employ teachers for the schools which their children attend, who could secure positions in no other schools."³⁴

From the point of view of the teachers themselves the situation was discovered to be no better in outlook. In seeking out positions in rural schools, the teachers came from two general backgrounds; first, from within the state: "...there are quite a number of the graduates of our own colleges, and universities, and teachers' colleges, who, finding themselves unable to secure a position in a graded school without actual school-room practice are compelled to take a country school, or none."³⁵ On the other hand, "Many teachers come to Colorado from other states, and quite a number of these are compelled to teach in country and small village schools to gain residence, obtain experience, and get acquainted in this state before they can secure positions in the city schools."³⁶ In the case of both these classifications of teachers there was a great similarity in their "utili-

zation³⁷ of the country schools as a "stepping stone" to the larger urban schools: "...they will often teach a year or two in country schools in order to establish a reputation to enable them to secure a town or city position."

Numerically, "The total number of teachers employed in all these districts was 19,563, of whom 3,208, or sixteen per cent were men and 16,355, or eighty-four per cent, were women."³⁸ Regarding these statistics the report concluded, "...education has nearly ceased to be a man's job, at least in the country schools....teaching a country school usually leads nowhere for a man, while it is a steppingstone to a graded school for women....most all conditions combine to favor the employment of women, instead of men teachers."³⁹

With regard to salaries, the result of this report was revealing: Of the fifty-three rural counties surveyed, "One county paid an average of \$81 per month (Gilpin Co.); six paid between \$70 and \$80; twenty paid between \$60 and \$70; twenty-three paid between \$50 and \$60; nine paid between \$40 and \$50, while one (Washington Co.) paid less than \$40 per month for the eight years."⁴⁰ The most common salary level was between \$50 and \$60—the same range which country school teachers were receiving some twenty to thirty years earlier!

In comparison with the 1913 Colorado statute mandating "...not less than 120 days of school, at a salary of not less than \$50 per month in each district..."⁴¹ it was discovered that: for the eight year average,

four counties (Washington, Yuma, Custer, and Baca) had school terms of less than 120 days, and ten counties (Custer, Cheyenne, Lincoln, Phillips, Logan, Baca, Yuma, Kit Carson, Sedgewick, and Washington) all had teacher salaries paid below the \$50 per month level.

In its examination of "Sites and Buildings" the report categorized them into three divisions: The first was districts in which the value of school sites and buildings was less than \$500; the second was districts in which the value of school sites and buildings was between \$500 and \$1,000; the third was those having sites and buildings in excess of \$1,000.

Within the first division, "There were 484 districts...in which the school house and grounds were valued at less than \$500, and 10,600 school children lived in these districts. This was 27 per cent of the total number of districts, and 12.5 per cent, or one-eighth of the school census of all the districts." ⁴² Some insight may be derived from the fact that, "...the average for the entire group was but \$284, or not enough to build a good shed. This represents an investment of \$14 per census pupil in sites and buildings for those 10,600 country children." ⁴³

In the second division, "There were 501 districts...and 16,829 school children lived in these districts. This was 29 per cent of the total number of districts, and 20 per cent of the school census." ⁴⁴

The average value of schools and school sites in this division was

\$693 ("...less than enough to build a good barn."⁴⁵) This valuation figure yields an average investment of \$20 per census pupil.

In the third division, "There were 740 districts....This was 44 per cent of the districts, and 54,745 children...."⁴⁶ Average site and school building in this division was valued at \$2,852, representing a per census pupil investment of \$38.

For all divisions the average investment per census pupil in school sites and buildings was \$32. It was also discovered that, "A number of districts did not invest a dollar in sites and buildings during the eight years, but were apparently content to rent a room in a private home, or to use one donated for that purpose."⁴⁷

Regarding these statistics on the physical facilities of Colorado's rural schools, it was concluded,

The utter inadequacy of the school plant, as found in most of the school districts here considered, is sufficient to account for much of the failure of these schools. This is very clear to anyone who will visit a large number of these districts in different parts of the state, and it is still more convincing to the one who will investigate the records of all these districts on this item. The school houses and grounds not only show the need of the expenditure of more money, but the dilapidated and unkempt condition of many of them clearly shows the lack of intelligent care.⁴⁸

The report then turns to the district system itself: "The district system was organized and built on the theory of giving each community a school of its own, and separateness and independence are its distinguishing characteristics."⁴⁹ These "distinguishing characteristics" were indeed diverse:

There is every degree of variation between these 1725 districts. They vary in area from a little more than one section of land to many townships; in assessable property on which taxes may be levied...from \$250 to more than \$1,000,000. They vary in number of children from an average of one in a district to 340; in number of teachers, from one to 18; in the value of buildings, from nothing to \$25,000, while there is little uniformity in length of term, taxes, or results. 50

Regarding its survey and analysis, the survey came to several conclusions on the district system as the fundamental organizational principle for rural education: In the first place, "The inherent difficulties in the district system are so great that they make its successful operation an impossibility in the average county in Colorado." 51 Secondly, and most important to the quality of rural education, the local school district was found to have significant weaknesses—"The unit of organization is too small to even permit of intelligent administration, while it is almost wholly lacking in supervision....Without a good organization...there is no reason to expect efficiency in these schools." 52

Concerning the tradition of excellence often attributed to country school education, the report first outlined their ideal—"The system that...produced so many illustrious men and women, and...otherwise 53 served the state and nation for more than a century." Then it stated its "realistic" view—"...while many noble men and women have begun their education in the rural schools, overcome its difficulties and some of them have later risen to the highest positions of honor and

service, yet for each of those who have attained success, there were scores of others equally able and deserving, who might have added as much to the state and nation had our rural schools done for them what they might and should have done."⁵⁴

One should not get the idea that, although criticisms were being voiced about the character and quality of rural education in Colorado, the movement across the landscape of more school districts had halted by this time. During the very years which were being surveyed for the above report, in fact, additional rural districts and schools were being established.

In northwestern Colorado, Moffat County provides one interesting example of twentieth-century school establishment. In 1911 this newly-organized county had 38 school districts, each organized for circumstances and conditions not greatly unchanged from the 1870's: "This was due to the transportation systems that created isolation in some areas, especially during the winter months. Each community or concentration of families built a school to suit their needs."⁵⁵

Brown's Park was one of these small communities which was little more than a concentration of families. Brown's Park School District had been organized a short while earlier, but in 1911 the existing school structure was an old cabin. That year, however, a new school building, the Ladore School, was built to improve the quality of education in the community.

In 1913 public education in Moffat County was functioning amid difficulties: "The school year...found 200 school children playing hooky They were eligible to attend school and the schools were there, but they were not being used."⁵⁶ The magnitude of this problem for individual schools may be judged from the fact that in that year, "...in Brown's Park District No. 1, only three children, out of 20 eligible, attended school at Ladore."⁵⁷ The reasons for these serious attendance problems were common to many rural school districts--"It is debatable if the fault was that of the children's through not being interested, or that of the parents, for keeping the children at home to work on the farm."⁵⁸

In the latter years of the 1910's, there were only two male teachers at Ladore. One of them did not last long, and for reasons which must have affected the other as well--"The farm boys of the Park did not understand a man who preferred a good book to a good horse, and they gave him a hard time."⁵⁹

The fact that at this relatively late date school districts and new schools of the "old" style (one-room) were still being built demonstrates the range of divergence which existed between the opinions of professional educators in the population centers and the "amateur" educators on the rural scene itself. This divergency was not an isolated phenomena of the time, but persisted through the later decades of the twentieth century as education changed with the times and increa-

sing pressures were brought to bear on the rural school districts to "keep pace" with this change even though the rural population, generally, was quite satisfied with their local school districts and school performance.

A typical Colorado county (Larimer) in the year 1914 contained 53 districts—two of the first class, one of the second class, and 50 of the third. The first and second class districts had a school census of just over 4,700; the third class districts had a census of 2,880. The first and second class districts had 15 school buildings, "...with an aggregate valuation of \$303,690, while the 50 third-class districts have 62 buildings with a valuation of only \$68,386. The average value of the buildings in the three districts (was)...\$20,000, while in the 50 it is only \$1,100.⁶⁰" The first and second class districts had school terms of 180 days, the 50 third class districts school terms were 147 days. High schools existed in the first and second class districts, but the 50 third class districts had none. "The average enrollment in the three districts was 89 per cent of the census, while in the 50 it was but 83 per cent. The average daily attendance in the three was 65 per cent of the enrollment, while in the 50 it was only 54 per cent of the enrollment."⁶¹ On the average for every day of school only 46 out of every 100 enrolled students actually attended class—and only one in five finished the full eight grade course.

Viewed more from the qualitative side, the three first and second

class districts employed 21 superintendents, principles, supervisors, and special teachers, the 50 third class districts none of these--except for the single county superintendent.

The magnitude of problems facing the county superintendents may be gained from a brief analysis of Weld County in 1914. Equal in size to the state of Rhode Island, Weld County had 110 independent school districts--three of the first and second class, and 107 of the third class. Not considering the first and second class districts, the county superintendent was confronted by 160 different schools, 255 teachers, and approximately 8,000 children to supervise. Further, for these districts there were a total of 321 school directors. The only direct supervision for these districts by the county superintendent was an annual visit required by law. Of the office of county superintendent itself: "...who is required to spend years in study and preparation, more years to get his experience, and who then receives less salary and less assistance to perform his work than does the county sheriff, clerk and recorder, assessor, or treasurer, for whom no educational test or experience is required." ⁶² Regarding the job of the county superintendent:

He acts only as a consulting agent, and if he wishes to raise the standards for teachers employed in the county, to increase the length of term, have uniformity of text books, a uniform course of study, or anything else that affects the actual conduct of the schools, he must first consult with 107 different school boards consisting of 321 members, any one of whom may disregard his suggestions. ⁶³

In April and May of 1914 the Colorado School Journal published a

series of analyses and discussions of rural school circumstances and problems. One of the important conclusions reached in these articles was that "There is a growing realization that the children of the country do not have the same educational opportunities in their schools that are open to all the children, rich and poor alike, in our cities."⁶⁴ In the larger perspective, it was concluded,

The educators of our country also are awakening to the need of better educational facilities for our country children and to the possibilities of a school system broadened and strengthened, with its course of study based on accurate knowledge of the daily life of its pupil and on a high inspirational motive used to give him an understanding of the principles and the dignity of the basic industries in which his parents are earning their livelihood.⁶⁵

The final upshot of this and the earlier surveys of rural education in Colorado pointed in some form or another to centralization or consolidation as the final remedy—with the major recommendation in the direction of consolidation. While this solution seemed perfectly logical to the professional educators and politicians, it did not coincide so well with the opinions of the country people themselves. "In general it was not easy to convince Colorado farmers that the transportation of children was a practical thing; and it was equally difficult...to convince people...that the education of the country children was necessary for the common good."⁶⁶

Although centralization was attempted in many Colorado districts, it was on a relatively small scale and little public notice was usually taken of it.

One important centralization did take place, however, on the eas-

tern plains which was significant in that it pointed the way for later centralization efforts. In the late 1910's centralization began in the New Raymer school district which was about sixty miles east of Greeley in Weld County. "This district comprised 162 square miles. Before the centralization there were eleven one-teacher schools scattered over these 162 square miles."⁶⁷ With centralization the majority of the small schools were closed in favor of one central school site which could be reached with relative ease from most places in the district. A new school was built there at the cost of \$30,000. In 1918 there were 205 students enrolled in this school—and it was pointed out as proof to other rural school districts in the state of the success with which this reform could result to the benefit of everyone in the school district—and especially the children.

Consolidation reform began shortly after the passage of the legislation enabling it:

The first consolidated school was in Mesa County, seven miles northwest of Grand Junction. "Appleton Consolidated School became a reality under the law of 1909."⁶⁸ This new school was constructed according to an outside architect's plans and on a three-acre site which retained its water right to the school. By "...the school year of 1917-1918, there was an attendance of 184, with 48 in attendance in the high school grades."⁶⁹

Another Mesa County school was the state's second consolidation, Fruitvale in 1911. This was followed by Cache La Poudre School, near

Fort Collins, in 1913. The fourth major Colorado consolidation resulted in the La Jara School in the San Luis Valley in 1914. "The later consolidations were: Sargent, in 1916; Hooper and Center, in 1917; Del Norte and Monte Vista, in 1918...."⁷⁰

Another influence was evolving from the federal government which was to affect increasingly the curricula of the Colorado rural schools by 1920 and after. "The national vocational education law, known as the Smith-Hughes Act, was signed by President Wilson on February 23, 1917...."⁷¹ Implemented in Colorado in the fall of that same year, the objectives of this Act were "...to promote the teaching of agriculture, trade, home economics, and industrial subjects which shall... be designed to fit for useful and productive employment, persons over 14 years of age."⁷² Thus, Smith-Hughes funding was to be directed through individual school districts to the betterment of occupational education for their students--with major emphasis in Colorado in the area of agriculture. "One of the essentials of all projects (for students within these districts) is that they shall be paying propositions....Production and profit are the chief incentives for the pupils, while the highest possible educational values and the development of character are the objects aimed at by the teacher in charge...."⁷³

Colorado rural school Smith-Hughes projects undertaken that first year included a potato-raising experiment by an 18-year-old girl at Fort Morgan High School, a poultry-raising project by an 18-year-old boy at Greeley High School, and a tractor project by a student of Lo-

gan County Industrial High School.

Beyond these agriculturally-oriented Smith-Hughes projects another area of importance was home economics instruction. In classes organized under this section of the Act the endeavor was to teach the students, "...among other things, how to prepare and serve, in the best and most approved way, the common articles of food that make up the daily fare in most farm homes, and to do this with food products that are already available, or that are easy to secure and that it is economical to use."⁷⁴

In these classes the students of many country schools were required to make their graduation gowns. At Fruitvale Consolidated School a hot lunch program was established for those students living too far from school to go home for lunch, and all the work of food preparation and associated activities was carried out by the students.

It may be seen that the Smith-Hughes Act was responsible for adding considerable breadth and depth to the country school curricula--and especially in those subject areas closest to country life itself. These programs, however, took place primarily in the larger, consolidated districts rather than the one schoolhouse, limited-enrollment districts.

In 1918 another survey was made of Colorado rural schools for the purpose of determining progress and the continued need for such at this level of the state's educational system. Entitled Rural School

Improvement in Colorado, this report dealt primarily with the consolidated districts in the state. It took its keynote from the earlier report on rural schools examined in some detail here previously: "The improvement of our rural schools has been for years, and still continues to be, the most important educational undertaking confronting our people. That our rural children do not have as good educational opportunities as our city children has become increasingly evident."⁷⁵

In introducing this report it was pointed out that by July 1, 1918 there were a total of 66 consolidated and centralized school districts in the state—"...notwithstanding the fact that the number is comparatively small...the plain story of the real achievements of these schools up to the present time makes the brightest chapter in rural school improvement within the history of the state."⁷⁶

In general, the report concluded, the progress in the area of school consolidation in Colorado was significant—"New School Houses, Better Equipment, and Larger School Sites."⁷⁷ In addition to this, and through cooperative effort and planning with the Smith-Hughes Act, the rural school curriculum had improved considerably: "Agriculture, domestic science, manual training, music, athletic and social activities, have proved (sic.) successful and even popular in most consolidated schools."⁷⁸

In these larger consolidated and centralized schools differing

circumstances required teachers of different background and capability than had been the rule in most rural schools: "The teacher who is willing to teach a rural school one or two years in order to serve her apprenticeship and thereby secure a position in some town school, no longer meets the need of many wide-awake rural districts that have grown tired of training teachers for city schools, paying for experience with the certainty of losing their teacher in case she
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proves satisfactory."

In these evolving circumstances the "new" rural teacher was coming to be considered as a unique "breed" within the teaching profession itself—"...there is coming to be a demand for rural teachers, teachers who are in sympathy with life in the country, who draw their illustrative materials largely from the country, and who teach from the
80
rural rather than the urban point of view." In light of these new requirements, "Some districts...are beginning to look for teachers with training and special preparation for work in rural schools. In many cases in which a teacher has earned a reputation as being a good rural teacher, she can secure a position in the country at a salary equal to what she would receive for doing the same grade of work in city
81
schools."

Beyond the progress this report found resulting in the improvement of country schools, one major area was indicated as still in need of work to assure that country schools could attract the most qualified

teachers--the teacherage. "Satisfactory living conditions for rural teachers present some problems that have not yet been solved."⁸² Common practice in rural schools dating from the nineteenth century and before was for the teacher to board with a local family. However, in the twentieth century this was no longer suitable or desirable: "The average farm home, even though it may be quite satisfactory for the different members of the family, does not afford suitable living accommodations for a teacher."⁸³ In recognition of the scale of this problem for rural schools in Colorado, "It is almost unbelievable that a great commonwealth like the state of Colorado would, in the twentieth century, have a school system that takes no account of the living conditions of 3,000 rural teachers in 1,700 rural school districts in which there are almost 100,000 school children."⁸⁴

The solution of this housing problem for rural teachers is proposed as the school-district-owned-and-maintained teacherage holding from one to four teachers according the full requirements for self-sufficient housekeeping and privacy for the teachers there. "The teacherage is commended to the people of the State as one of the vital agencies necessary to a solution to our rural school problems."⁸⁵

Generally speaking, this report found much to approve of in the progress and development of Colorado's consolidated school systems:

This report of the progress made by our state in consolidation and centralization of its rural and village schools shows what can be accomplished by local effort. When the difficulties that must be overcome are considered, this work is a splendid testimony to the interest of the people in their schools, and to their willingness to pay more for better educational facilities.⁸⁶

It is well to be reminded here, in the face of this glowing approval for the progress of centralized and consolidated schools, that such school districts were still in the minority--and almost dwarfed by the number of "traditional" school districts operating under the same circumstances and with the same facilities as they had in the nineteenth century.

However, in the Twenty-Third Biennial Report by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1920, it was possible to note, "About one hundred and thirty consolidated and centralized schools function in Colorado...."⁸⁷ While this record was indicated with pride, it was affecting school structures in the state as a whole: "There are over four thousand school buildings in Colorado, a decrease of nearly two thousand in recent years, owing to the rapid growth of the consolidated school idea."⁸⁸

Circumstances of teachers and teaching had also changed: "During the present Biennium, an alarming shortage of teachers existed with a consequent filling of teaching positions by far too many teachers without professional training. The year 1920 has witnessed a lessening of this shortage and a raising of the qualifications of

those applying for teaching positions in Colorado." ⁸⁹

One important note was made in this Biennial Report in recognition of the growing influx of immigrants into Colorado and their effects upon the educational system: "...Colorado was the first commonwealth to adopt Americanization in the schools by the authority of the Department of Public Instruction." ⁹⁰ This introduction of a formal approach to confronting the problems of immigrant children in the public school system demonstrated a vision of the values and opportunities for the realization of America's "melting pot" philosophy and idea through the direct intercession of public education—something, of course, which had been a fact long before this official acknowledgement.

In the conclusion to the Biennial Report the State Superintendent surveyed the course of Colorado rural school evolution in the first two decades of the century: "The Biennium ending November 30, 1920, has witnessed a marked improvement in the educational standards in Colorado, and educational efficiency has been increased through a more widely diffused knowledge of educational needs on the part of school officers, teachers and the community." ⁹¹

While this statement held true for those districts which had moved in the direction of centralization or consolidation, those hundreds which had not simply continued with their traditional coun-

try schools and instruction just as they had for many decades before—and would continue to do so for decades into the future.

COLORADO:
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
1900-1920

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COLORADO:
1920-1940

The period of roughly twenty years which stretched between the two great world wars were highly important in Colorado as they introduced several forces into the educational circumstances (or accelerated the effect of those already present) in the state which both applied pressure for dynamic change and mitigated against such change.

While these forces were felt throughout the state's school systems, both urban and rural, it can be said that they exerted a maximum of pressure in the rural areas. The post-World-War I economic expansion felt throughout the United States through the 1920's, the continuing effects of the high influx of immigration into the country, the coming of the Great Depression, and an increasing trend towards rural decline were all forces which acted to determine the character and development of the schools during this period--and each had its own particular influence on the evolution of the rural public schools from the late-pioneer institutions which they were in 1920 to a more forward-looking, but diverse and variously-focused social phenomena that 1940 found them.

A 1921 publication of the Department of Rural Education of Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley, entitled The School and the Community, introduced a brief analysis of rural education in Colorado with a re-dedication of the traditional role of the school in American

education: "It is the first duty of the elementary teacher to teach the so-called 'tool subjects' so well that afterward the pupil will not be hampered by lack of power in reading, by poor spelling, imperfect writing, and stumbling arithmetic."¹ In addition to this traditional charge it was also indicated that teachers in Colorado's rural schools at the dawning of the third decade of the twentieth century faced differing challenges: "'New occasions teach new duties.' Never was there so much expected of the teacher as there is at the present time. He is still expected to teach the tool subjects well, and rightly so, as they are the foundations for all substantial progress; but on the other hand other subjects are demanding attention."²

In defining the character of these new challenges to the educational (and primarily rural) system of the 1920's, the evolving nature of the times was emphasized: "No longer are we hearing of 'out of school into life,' for it is realized that the right sort of a school is life itself. The great problem in education is to bring the outside world into the school room, and to tie up books with the reality of life. Other things being equal, the teacher who realizes this most keenly, and ties up the school with the community, will meet with the greatest success."³

In light of these new requirements for teaching in the 1920's and beyond, this report outlined a number of "Essentials for the Teacher": "First must come scholarship"—This teaching must be of such

expert and applicable character that, "...what else were dust and dead men's bones might through our efforts have breathed into it the reality of life, and that the boy or girl who is our pupil may leave our hands forever, to some extent, an educated person, and with a larger view of life."⁴

Second only to scholarship is the necessity that "The teacher... get acquainted with the community."⁵ This knowledge of the community is invaluable for the fulfillment of the teacher's role in the larger society: "Study your community, and your own gifts, vision and power, and then attempt the most practicable thing that will make your work wider than the four walls of your schoolroom."⁶

By 1925 another of the major surveys of the Colorado rural schools was published. Beginning with the historical development of the state-wide school system and its legal background, it was critical of a number of elements basic to its reality and function.

At the heart of this critique was the district system itself. In its historical context, it was pointed out, the district system had validity: "In the territories and the newly organized states the district system was a simple and democratic means of providing schools for the children of the people under pioneer conditions. Where economic conditions are somewhat uniform and undeveloped, population sparse, communication difficult, educational ideas rather primitive and supervision lacking, the system is naturally of most importance."⁷

In the early 1920's, however, these pioneer circumstances no longer applied. These new circumstances clearly demonstrated the weaknesses of the district system:

- "1. It does not permit of effective administration and supervision.
2. Causes inequalities of school support and school privileges.
3. Encourages a narrow provincialism which is always fatal to strong public opinion for public school administration.
4. In proportion to the good accomplished it is more expensive than a centralized administration.
5. Increases greatly the number of school officers and establishes as many little school systems as there are school districts.
6. It is responsible for the short tenure of position in the smaller schools resulting in a new and untried teacher every year or two.
7. Causes trained teachers to seek employment in towns and cities."

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In addition to the weaknesses of the district system, the report also was critical of the County Superintendent system in Colorado.

As local school districts had proliferated, there was created an almost untenable expansion of the County Superintendent's duties:

The county superintendent is required to visit each school at least three times during the school year; to keep a record of his official acts; to keep a record of the registers, record books, and order-books furnished to the...districts of his county; hold county teachers' associations; ascertain, and adjust if necessary, the boundaries of each school district in his county and keep a record of the same; prepare, or have prepared, school district maps; examine and compare the census list of the several districts; apportion the school funds; adjust dif-

difficulties arising in local communities; attend to a large correspondence and exercise a careful supervision of the schools of his county.

The general effect of this proliferation of duties was inimical to effective supervision and good education. Furthering this negative effect was often the character of the County Superintendents themselves (being the necessarily political animals they often had to be): "They are anxious to make a good financial record for themselves and have less knowledge of what is essential to good schools than to good roads and bridges. As a rule they place a low estimate upon the work of the office, thus forgetting that a careful supervision of the schools of a county would improve the quality of instruction and advance the standards of popular education."

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The time had come for change: The combination of a proliferation of school districts and counterproductive County Superintendents had produced several defects in the administrative structure of the rural schools which were significantly harmful to the quality of rural education as a whole—of which too many school boards, ineffective county supervision, and inequities of school support were seen to be the most serious.

Along with these observations, this report provided some statistical background on Colorado schools and school districts: In totality, in 1923, there were 1,944 school districts in the state serving a school census of 287,318. (Roughly, this means the average school

district, served 148 students.) The number of school districts in some counties was also often large; for example Boulder County had 175; Yuma, 106; Weld, 105; and Las Animas, 124. Many of these school districts were recent additions and as much the result of growth in the indigenous population as the coming of immigrants to the area. Serving the state school districts were a total of 5,832 school directors—or a total of over one percent of the entire state's population.

There were 2,138 one-teacher schools (roughly 34 per county on the average). Some counties accounted for considerably more than the average number, such as Elbert County with 83 one-teacher schools (in 41 districts), Lincoln County with 76 (42 districts), Morgan County with 56 (19 districts), and Cheyenne County with 40 (11 districts).¹¹

Taking as its theme, "...if the rural school fail, rural civilization will fail...,"¹² the report pointed out a number of circumstances contributing to weaknesses of the country schools:

1. The average school year is more than two months shorter than in the city.
2. For every one dollar the city child has invested in his teacher, the rural child has only fifty-five cents.
3. The typical country school teacher is an eighteen year-old girl, with a tenth-grade education, who stays but one year in a place, and whose only supervision is one or two visits annually from a county superintendent with little or no professional training.

4. Most rural schools (80% of them) are held in poorly furnished, one-room buildings, where recitations are but ten or fifteen minutes in length, and only meager elementary instruction is given, with nature study, manual training, home economics, and even agriculture omitted.¹³

As a solution to many of these problems this report concluded with a recommendation for further rural school consolidation: "In the centralized or consolidated school good teaching can carry over into the social and intellectual activities of parents. Trained teachers are attracted to a community that offers opportunities for real service."¹⁴ The larger consolidated school in the community and serving that community as a whole is proposed as the most effective means of unifying the needs of the individual with those of the community itself: "...boys and girls can remain at home and assist in the farm work and household cares while they are receiving a liberal education offered by an accredited high school."¹⁵ In sum, considering the values inherent in the larger community consolidated school, "There is no factor in rural school organization that has in it greater possibilities for community growth and solidarity than has the larger type of school now being established...."¹⁶

Indeed, and probably due in large part to reports such as this written from the viewpoint of administrative^e efficiency and favoring consolidation, this movement made continued progress in Colorado throughout the first part of the 1920's. By 1921, "...Colorado had 116 consolidated schools, located in 38 counties, with an enrollment

of 29,000.¹⁷"

Although consolidation was progressing throughout the state during these years, and the movement was highly effective in the reduction of school districts and one-teacher schools around the state, the acceptance of this movement was not entirely universal: "Consolidation has not come without effort. There was always that natural resistance to change which had to be overcome. Sentiment played a great part in opposition. The matter of increased cost was also a source of hostility.¹⁸" Often it was not just intransigent individuals who stood in the way of this consolidated movement, whole communities occasionally came into conflict over the questions regarding the values of consolidation in the face of a feared loss of community individuality and identification: "Communities had to be convinced of the social value of the consolidated school....The value of a good school was shown—the possibility of getting better-trained teachers and the assurance of better business management. Great pains were taken to show the increased advantage of a fuller curriculum.¹⁹"

The personal recollections of a typical school board member during consolidation demonstrates the feelings involved: "...I was appointed to the board of re-organization of the school districts of Baca County. We reduced the districts from...14 down to 6. I know that was one committee where I made more enemies faster than any other....When you talk to people about taking away their school, you

just about as well tell them they are going to the wrong church."²⁰

Due to the fact that consolidated schools almost always involved travel by the students farther than had previously been the case, the matter of transportation was sometimes a key issue. It was remembered, however, in northwestern Colorado by a resident that this transportation was simply taken in course: "Some kids walked, some rode horseback, some came by wagon or by sled in the wintertime, and some even had their father bring them in to school in the farm truck."²¹

The transportation issue was brought dramatically to the fore in 1931 "...when a school bus bearing 22 children was caught in a spring blizzard."²² The bus was returning the children home from school in the eastern Colorado community of Towner. "The driver, who left his charges in the bus and set out to bring aid, perished in a field a few miles distant. Five children also died from exposure."²³ In commemoration of this event, many years later when the new Towner school was built, it was constructed on the site of the school bus tragedy and dedicated to those who lost their lives there.

The non-consolidated schools were having other problems with their transportation, as an ex-teacher from northwestern Colorado remembered:

...we saw the need for a school bus. We had had bad luck with our little car, and found it burned up one morning after giving a careless smoker a ride the night before. The motor was still

good, so it was fixed up with a long box bed built on the back. ...Gene East...lived at Skull Creek. Gene was an 8th grader that year. It was agreed that Gene could be our bus driver.... so he drove our improvised bus and picked up all the pupils from Massadona and up the road to the schoolhouse, probably 15 miles....I rode with Gene in the seat, and the back end held all the others—our open air bus.²⁴

Controversies over consolidation continued to crop up following its course across the state. However, by the late 1920's it could be pointed out that, "Consolidation in Colorado has now reached a period when its superiority is not questioned by those living in the districts of consolidated schools."²⁵ By 1930 it was possible for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to announce in her Report that, "The one-room school is fast disappearing in the settlement of the heretofore thinly populated localities and through consolidation and centralization the schools are being organized and well directed for the best interests of the community."²⁶

By 1930, however, another factor had come into the picture which tended to minimize the controversies for and progress of consolidations: the Great Depression. "The stock market panic of November, 1929, initiated a period of general depression throughout the state.... the great drop in prices that ensued entailed heavy losses for merchants, manufacturers, farmers.... Lack of confidence and a feeling of financial insecurity further impeded the normal flow of business."²⁷

These economic difficulties were bound to have reflection in the schools across the state, and especially in the rural districts many

of which had only been able to provide a minimum of financial support for schools in the best of times. Outbacks in the prices of farm products, and the resulting reduction of community income as a whole, placed the schools into deeper financial straits. The purchase of school books and supplies by the districts were out back, repairs and maintenance of school buildings was deferred, teacher salaries were cut back; many of these rural schools which had already been working on the edge of financial disaster were pushed further in that direction. Often funds on deposit in local banks to pay teacher's salaries ran out and the teachers were paid with warrants against future funds in such accounts. Needing funds to live, the teachers were often forced to sign over these warrants for sums less than face value in return for the ready cash required. Many times teachers were actually paid in farm produce, eggs, butter, and other such commodities instead of what was often recognized as worthless paper warrants or checks.

In spite of these difficulties which placed new strains on the already struggling rural schools, the general faith of the people in their local schools was not displaced, and often extraordinary efforts were required to keep things operating for the assurance of education for the children.

A brief report from the San Miguel County school was included

in the State Superintendent's biennial Report in 1930 which demonstrated the effects of this depressed period both in what was said and what was to be understood between the lines: "Despite the financial depression caused by our bank failure the schools of our county have gone steadily on. The teachers, true to type, shouldered added burdens willingly, and the records made last year by students were creditable indeed....Character development is stressed in every school."

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While communities, teachers, and local school administrators did their best to maintain the previous quality and character of their local schools throughout the early depression period, the economic woes of rural communities were bound to have some significant effect. In spite of all efforts, on the whole, the schools deteriorated. In 1935 the University of Colorado Bureau of Business and Government analysed the situation and, in light of its negative findings, concluded that circumstances had deteriorated so much that, unless some effective means of re-establishing the centralization and consolidation movement were found, the education provided by these schools would, in effect, fail altogether. Entitled The Elimination of Small Schools in Colorado, this report pointed out in its introduction that, "The solution of the rural district school problem is the most important educational problem facing the state."

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It began with a brief survey of the circumstances it found in the typical rural schools:

The typical one-room school is not provided with sufficient text books, reference books, playground equipment, up-to-date seating and modern sanitary conveniences and the instruction offered is supplied by a teacher with a minimum of training and experience who is supposed to prepare and teach between 30 and 40 lessons per day to pupils ranging from the first to the sixth grade. The annual cost of educating a child in this inefficient type of school unit is three times as expensive as in the larger school systems.³⁰

Supporting these opinions and conclusions, this report outlined some major factors at work in the rural areas of the state which were exerting powerful negative influences upon the school systems there:

Most significant was "Shifts in population due to rapid urban-
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ization, the decline in mining and agriculture...." It noted that during the decade from 1920 to 1930, 26 of Colorado's 63 counties had decreased in population. The population of incorporated cities *and had* increased in that same period by 12.9 per cent while that of rural territories had increased only by 6.2 per cent—or less than half. Further, and even more devastating to the rural school systems was the fact that, "Of the rural communities of one thousand or less, 63
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decreased in population."

Clearly, the report noted, "These facts are reflected in school
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enrollment." Statistics demonstrated that 38 per cent of the state's children were found in rural areas. In spite of the forces towards centralization and consolidation in the previous twenty years, in 1935 there were 2,057 school districts in the state, an increase of 113 since 1923. 1,935 of these were rural third-class districts, and

their total school census was 57,480 (30.5 per cent of the state's total. During the years 1933-34 the survey discovered that 93 districts did not operate any schools at all. "There were 189 districts or 15 per cent of the third class districts which had an average attendance of 5 pupils or less; 18 districts had but a single pupil; 25 districts had 2 pupils; 38 districts had 3 pupils; 56 districts had 4 pupils; and 62 districts had 5 pupils." ³⁴ An additional 363 districts had between 6 and 15 pupils; 197 districts, between 16 and 20. Thus, over half of Colorado's school districts (1,078) serviced 20 pupils or less.

These statistics were seen as a clear demonstration of the conclusion that "Decadent mining regions and deserted farms result in decadent or deserted school houses." ³⁵

Other forces seen as contributing to the deterioration of rural life and education in Colorado were "Shifts in the character of our wealth and income from land and tangible property to various types of intangible wealth..." ³⁶ and "The rapid growth of modern transportation facilities...." ³⁷

This report also made the point that school district boundaries had not always been outlined according to the logic of population patterns or for efficient administration and organization but that, "... present school district boundaries have been formed to include valuable properties, such as mileage of railroads, coal mines or factories

rather than to afford a logical, coordinated unit of school administration.³⁸ The inequities and illogic found in such school district boundaries, however, were not seen as easily remedied: "These inequalities which exist in the present system create certain advantages for certain districts and will stand in the way of securing sound, rational, well-planned redistricting of school districts based upon educational needs through local initiative."³⁹

The result of this survey and study was, of course, predictable: "The simple remedy is to reorganize the district school system into larger units of administration so that each school may fit into a broad, well-directed, comprehensive educational plan for the entire state."⁴⁰

The general conclusion was just as predictable: "The small one-room district school is hopelessly inefficient and the thousands of country boys and girls who attend them are deprived of adequate training and equal educational advantages which are enjoyed by the boys and girls who attend city schools."⁴¹

In the face of all these statistics and conclusions in opposition to the existence and continuation of the local rural school, surprisingly, the authors of the report pointed out that, to some degree, such schools would always be an important factor in the state's educational system: "...there will always be instances where small schools are necessary in Colorado...."⁴²

These reduced financial circumstances for rural schools and urban schools alike created a situation in which many teachers had become unemployed. To contribute to this situation there were state normal schools and other educational institutions which were adding to the pool of teachers available for and seeking employment. The increase in the number of teachers looking for employment and the reduction of actual available positions formed a condition in which one peripheral business in the private sector came into its own--the teachers' agency.

Teachers' agencies had been in existence in the east for some time, some dated back into the last decade of the nineteenth century. These businesses operated much as employment agencies do today. Out of work teachers would apply to the teachers' agency for placement in some community needing teaching personnel. General circumstances, however, mitigated against these organizations capability of offering the best positions to their applicants. To begin with, the larger, more urban school districts were considered to be the best place to teach at the time, and, for this reason, teachers applied directly to these institutions and were placed on the waiting list. Thus, these schools were provided with a steady stream of teaching applicants without the necessity of referring to outside, private aid in recruitment. Secondly, the larger or more prosperous rural school districts either had continuing teaching staffs which avoided the necessity of outside re-

recruitment or themselves had waiting lists which solved their staffing problems if and when they arose. Thirdly, when a good teacher found a position in a good school system in those hard times, all means were employed to remain in that position so as not to endanger financial and job security by moving onwards to uncertain circumstances.

For these reasons the teachers' agencies most commonly handled recruitment for those less financially-independent, less-desirable communities which found difficulty in competing with their larger and more prosperous urban and consolidated counterparts. For many years these teachers' agencies had been the mainstay of these districts which had little to offer the teacher in the way of professional advancement, salary, living conditions, or tenure. Teachers were often not encouraged to remain for more than one year as this meant some kind of an increase in salary which the district was either unable or ^{unwilling to} ~~unwilling to~~ ~~undesirous of~~ paying. Therefore, the teachers' agency was useful in assisting with the constant turnover in the small, impoverished rural school districts.

The teachers' agency would arrange the hiring of the out-of-work teacher at one of its client schools in return for a percentage of the teacher's yearly salary—usually between 5 and 10 per cent. This fee had to be paid from the teacher's first month's pay.

It was common for these agencies to advertise in publications often read by educators. It was not unusual, for example, for The Colorado School Journal to carry a page or so of individual advertisements by these businesses. Those advertising usually covered the middle-west region of the United States as well as Colorado, thus there were often to be found ads for agencies in Chicago, Illinois, Nebraska, or Minnesota. Many of these same companies also advertised their offices farther west, such as Washington or Oregon. Those Denver agencies were, among others, the Colorado Teachers' Agency, managed by Fred Dick ("Ex-State Superintendent"); Fisk Teachers' Agencies, which advertised "35,000 positions filled—29th Year—Salaries Aggregating \$23,000.00"; and The Great West Teachers' Agency, "Unequalled facilities for placing teachers in the west. New Methods."

One agency often advertised was the B.F. Clark Teachers' Agency, with offices in Chicago, Lincoln, Nebraska, Baltimore, Maryland and Spokane, Washington. Its major advertising "pitch" was that it was "The Agency with the Short Understandable Contract." Another agency was named, somewhat forebodingly in light of many teachers' experiences as the result of their placement through teachers' agencies, The Hazard Teachers' Agency.

While seemingly benevolent businesses, interested in providing teachers with employment and school districts with teachers for a relatively minor fee, these teachers' agencies were, more often than not,

little more than confidence games. Their major concern, according⁴³ to one teacher of the time who had extensive experience with them, was in getting teachers hired and getting their money, with little or no concern ever exerted to assure that the teaching circumstances were, at least, minimal, living accommodations were adequate, or social conditions in the community were conducive to education. Quite often they would hire a teacher and send her out to a situation which was foreordained to be very short-term—occasionally just two weeks or a month—as circumstances were so inhospitable that the teacher would usually resign her contract (such as it was with all the rights on the side of the district school board and all the responsibilities on the side of the teacher), and leave town as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the agency had received its fee in advance, subtracted from the teacher's first check and passed on to the agency by the district itself.

While this situation may seem untenable to teachers of the day, as indeed it often was, they found themselves caught into the position of being able to do little about it. "What else could we do—that was all there was?"⁴⁴ The teachers were often so desperate for employment in the shrunken job market that they continued to utilize the services of the teachers' agencies as the last opportunity for "professional" employment.

Although it may, at first, seem that the communities themselves would find this situation aggravating, for most this was not neces-

early the case. As it was not uncommon for the teachers to leave with their first month's salary uncollected, the district would end up having paid only 10 per cent of the total to the agency, get one to three weeks of free teaching in its school, and then simply hire another teacher the same way. (It must be pointed out, of course, that not all teachers' agencies operated in this way, and that not all teachers hired through these agencies got this treatment, but as time got harder, these abuses tended to increase.)

In recognition of these abuses, and the continuing problems of Colorado teachers in finding employment, the Colorado Education Association eventually established its own employment office which attempted to displace the teachers' agencies in finding (suitable) employment for teachers. (The CEA's own agency, it should also be pointed out, also experienced its own problems in locating teachers adequate teaching circumstances--as at least one individual found out⁴⁵ but they eventually were effective in reducing the worst of the teachers' agency abuses.)

After the 1930's the teachers' agencies gradually faded into insignificance as public and state organizations took on their activities, but during the 1920's and 1930's the teachers' agencies had represented an important factor in the teaching profession and its employment conditions in Colorado.

By the latter years of the 1930's conditions began to change again. With the improvement of general economic conditions on the national level, Colorado's economic and social conditions also began to improve. The impetus towards centralization and consolidation began to move forward again. A 1935 Act of the Colorado Legislature which "...permitted the dissolution of some districts by the vote of the people..."⁴⁶ further hastened this development. The rising tide of European fascism also contributed in some way to this renewal of interest in the betterment of the conditions of rural education by dramatizing the peril that faced the democratic form of government and the freedoms which Americans idealized so highly—all seen as direct outgrowths of the educational system. As Inez Johnson Lewis, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, pointed out in the Thirty-Second Report:

Recent developments prove that we must improve our educational program throughout the country if our democratic form of government is to stand the test. The people of this great Commonwealth must decide the issues at stake. The intelligence of their decisions will be proportionate to their ability to study and judge wisely. Our schools must meet the challenge, therefore, by doing a better job than has ever been done before of preparing citizens to take their place in our democracy.⁴⁷

As one means of attacking this momentous challenge, the State Department of Education created its Elementary Division in 1939, "...for the purpose of assisting those engaged in educational work with the problems which they are meeting in the improvement of instruction."⁴⁸ While this Division was directed at aiding both rural and

urban school districts in the fulfillment of this goal, a major element of its activities was directed at the rural schools as being those most in need of assistance.

The first problem in the area of elementary education to be addressed by the Division was that of the reading program, and a key element of the introduction of its reading program into the rural schools—along with the other activities of the Division as a whole—was the County Visitation Program. It "...consisted of holding meetings with groups of teachers to discuss reading and other instructional programs, visits to schools where special help was desired, and individual conferences with county superintendents in regard to problems in improving instruction."⁴⁹

During the first year of this Visitation Program's activity a total of 25 counties were involved on a regular basis, with an additional 17 having been visited only occasionally. Yet other brief county meetings were held which brought the total contact of the program for that year to 49. One hundred and ten schools were visited and 1,730 teachers took part in the visitation programs.⁵⁰

Thus, after having experienced almost a full decade of neglect and deterioration, by the late 1930's Colorado's rural schools were once again becoming a center of attention for both local and state officials. While the direction of this attention may not have always been toward the recognition of the value and contributions of the ru-

ral schools, these new signs of interest at least indicated that the country schools of Colorado would not simply fade away into disuse with the attendant decay of statewide education as a whole. "Without some great agency, such as an excellent school system, it is thought by many that the agrarian way of life as we now know it will pass into large-tract commercial farming by individuals and companies on the one hand, and farm tenantry on the other....the necessity of making provision for the development of a rich social and economic life is essential for the safety of our country."⁵¹

By the outbreak of World War II rural education in Colorado had actually progressed very little from the conditions and circumstances which applied in the first three decades of the twentieth century--in fact, it could easily be said that many deteriorated at a faster rate than before. The depressed economic and agricultural conditions of the time did not lend themselves to growth and advancement in educational facilities. As one ex-country-teacher remembered the time,

Unfortunately, as social conditions of the country in general changed, and we saw the mass migration from ranch, farm and homestead to the cities, it seemed increasingly difficult to attract good teachers to the country schools. The decline in rural population together with a depression of the agriculture economy often left too few rural children in a community or otherwise made it economically infeasible to maintain a country school.⁵²

In 1940, however, it was coming to be recognized that the rural, agrarian way of life did not, in reality, represent a part of life

which should be pushed aside by "progress," but that it represented an important mainstay of the American tradition which should be encouraged and supported—and the improvement of the rural schools, through whatever means possible, would provide for this.

COLORADO:
1920-1940

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COLORADO:
1940-1950

The fifth decade of the twentieth century brought ~~even~~ more dynamic changes in Colorado's rural schools than had ever taken place before. From the end of the Great Depression through the turbulent years of the Second World War and on into the post-War era, a wide range of challenges and problems were encountered and dealt with in varying degrees of success in the rural schools as they were forced into a closer direct confrontation with the changing times as they had never been before in their history.

Many of the old problems, however, still remained: aging school buildings were still in need of repair, teacher recruitment and tenure still represented serious problems, and school funding still provided the most onerous challenge of all. These traditional problems combined with a continued shift in populations, changing economic interests, and the post-War social trends, placed increasing pressures on rural school systems.

One of the most significant of these problems grew out of the war itself: the shortage of qualified school teachers. "During the... World War...the situation was very critical. The issuance of emergency certificates was authorized by the Board of Education in 1942-43. That year 800 certificates were issued.¹ As the war continued this emergency certification program also continued: "Each year this number increased...."²

The end of the war in 1945, however, did not solve the teacher shortage: In "...the school year of 1946-1947...the peak was reached with 2,497 (emergency) certificates (being issued)."³ In 1947 the state required that holders of emergency teaching certificates pursue in-service education to maintain their certification and improve their general proficiency--that year it was only four hours, but the next it was increased to 12. The shortage did not let up appreciably, however, and this emergency certification program continued through 1950 when 1,635 certificates were issued.

Although a certain portion of these emergency certificates were issued to less-than adequately trained teachers entering the urban or rural consolidated schools, it may be presumed that a significantly greater proportion of them ended up in the smaller country districts. This was because the greater salaries offered by the urban and consolidated districts acted, undoubtedly, to siphon off the better-trained and regularly certificated teachers, while the country districts had little to offer them. Thus, it may be assumed that most of these emergency-certificated teachers were employed in the one and two-room schoolhouse districts in the country.

In certain areas of the state post-war prosperity brought with it an improvement of rural financial circumstances which allowed for some improvement of school physical facilities, the large-scale introduction of transportation facilities which speeded up the impetus to

school district consolidation, and the improvement of instructional materials in general. These areas--and the schools which benefitted from their prosperity--in general, were in the minority.

In 1949 additional legislation was passed which provided for a quickening of the consolidation movement. While the words "rural" or "country" did not appear in the Act itself, the direction of its intent was clear:

The General Assembly hereby declares this Act is passed for the general improvement of the public schools in the State of Colorado; the equalization of the benefits and burdens of education throughout the various counties and communities of the State; to provide for the reorganization of the public school districts in the state; and the alteration of the boundaries of established districts and generally to enlarge the areas of school districts in the state in order to provide for the maintenance of a thorough and uniform system of free public schools throughout the state; to provide for high school education of the citizens of the state of school age who are qualified therefor; to make possible a higher degree of uniformity of school tax rate among school districts and to have a wiser use of public funds expended for the support of the public school system of the state....⁴

This Act was to be implemented through the office of the State Commissioner of Education (the successor to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction) who was given,

...the responsibility of making a thorough study of the school systems in the various states and to make a thorough study of the plan or plans for reorganization in each county of the state and to make available to the county committees in each county all information, facts, figures and statistics gained through such study and survey.⁵

Each county of the state was to designate a County Committee whose responsibility it was to examine closely their own indigenous

school districts, create a plan for reorganization, to arrange the elections necessary to such reorganizations, to promote the reorganizations, and to supervise their carrying out—among other things.

This same Report also treated the subject of the County Superintendents. Rather than eliminating these offices, however, their duties were outlined in greater detail—and the proposal was made that such offices should be increased in their scope and responsibility. Further, "Careful study and thought of this program should result in the determination of policies and responsibilities for this office such as will cause the status of the County Superintendent of Schools in Colorado to be greatly improved, and thereby attract individuals of professional competence, who are capable of educational leadership."⁶

Previous recommendations for the elimination of this office was also discussed—especially in light of the reduction of the gross number of school districts after the proposed consolidations would occur: "This point of view reflects a lack of understanding of the needs of the schools and the potentialities for improved education for all the children that is certain to result from expansion and improvement of the county superintendent's office."⁷ The political slanting of the County Superintendent's office, however, was not overlooked: "As long as this office remains political and is concerned with clerical duties alone it will not command the respect of the general public, or attract capable educators."⁸

State policymaking and politics aside, however, the day-to-day realities of teacher shortages were little changed from circumstances of earlier times. The previously-noted situation of teacher shortages has been outlined by an individual who knew of them first hand: "In normal times the turnover of teachers in rural areas is an alarming indication that there is a definite lack of long-range planning. In times of shortage, like the present, the rural areas are first to feel its effect in empty classrooms...."⁹

Teacher's wages in rural areas had not changed significantly either: "...the lowest salary...was \$750 (per year), and the highest was \$3,000...."¹⁰ In fact, salaries paid to rural teachers were about one-half of that paid their urban counterparts. As one rural teacher dreamed, "I wish that we teachers might some day reach the salary scale held by shearherders in this vicinity."¹¹ In addition to low wages for rural teachers, there were other inequities which complicated the issue: "...salaries are not based on any orderly scale of values. Teachers with no college degree and little experience are being paid, in some instances, more than teachers in the same county with B.S. degrees and years of experience."¹²

Once the rural teacher was found and hired, the low wages and possible inequities of salaries often became distant problems in the face of actual living conditions encountered: "One teacher reported she shared her room with the entire family in a cabin home, with ke-

rosene lamp lighting, outside water supply and toilet, and coal¹³ and wood for heating and cooking..."—in short, living conditions termed by the Colorado Association of School Boards as "primitive."

One rural Colorado teacher of the day described the conditions in which she was expected to live while carrying out the sacred mission of her profession:

My room has a clothes line crossing it thirteen times. On Monday evenings the landlord's heavy underwear is left to dry in my room. Most always there are other clothes left there to dry. There are twenty screen doors behind my bed; ten one-hundred-pounds (sic.) sacks of flour against the wall; skis and an old slop-jar under my bed; surplus electric fans, boxes, suitcases stored in the room, and the smell of moth balls fills the room.¹⁴

If the teacher lived where she could cook for herself, there were possibly other problems: "The distance to the nearest grocery¹⁵ store ranges from a mile to forty-seven miles." If conditions at home were not bad, community conditions often were: "The only place¹⁶ to eat is at the local beer joint."

It was the finding of a survey of the Colorado Association of School Boards at the time that, "One-third of the rural teachers live in homes without electricity. More than half depend upon a well or cistern for their water supply and use coal or wood stoves for their cooking and heating. More than half their homes do not have inside plumbing facilities, and little more than a third have a bathtub and¹⁷ hot water."

Getting to school in the late 1940's resembled "modern" trans-

portation very little: "One rural teacher in Routt County is forced to ride horseback to her school because of snow-blocked roads."¹⁸

Upon arrival at the school itself, the rural schoolteacher was often confronted with additional dispiriting circumstances: "...a one-room schoolhouse with six windows on either side, an entry hall with the plaster falling from the walls and the ceiling, a hole through the door letting the light through...."¹⁹

Interestingly enough, although the article describing these conditions in rural education was very critical, the values of rural education themselves were not denigrated: "The country must be educated to the fact that its future welfare depends more largely on rural education than upon education in any other area."²⁰

In support of this assertion, the article pointed up certain major areas in which rural education had to be improved in order to meet the challenges of its important role in the education of Americans in the latter half of the century: "Teacher's salaries and the present method of taxation are inadequate to guarantee rural children adequate education; two, the rural education problem affects the region and nation as a whole, and, three, rural areas are denied valuable leadership potential in higher-skilled teachers."²¹

In pursuit of these important activities, needs, and roles for rural education, significant problems existed: "Salaries must be increased. Adequate living quarters must be provided....Retirement

and tenure plans must be arranged. School board procedures must
be improved and standardized."²²

Perhaps most significant were the final recommendations of the articles: "...federal aid should be obtained for rural schools, but control should remain within the state and districts."²³

By the latter years of the 1940's and early 1950's the awareness of the full effects of consolidation began to be felt—especially by older members of the community (principally ex-one-room students or teachers) who remembered things as they had been before. Opinions varied in regard to the values of the consolidated schools—but there was little disagreement as to the fact that something important had been lost in the passing of the small schoolhouse:

...There was quite a lot of trouble about it (consolidation). The country schools were unwilling to give up their control, and they hated to see, especially the primary children, so far away from home all day....Parents were used to having them close, and they also hated to give up their social centers in the neighborhood. The children from three to twenty-five (in a school room) had lots of individual help. Even though reluctant to give up the district, especially as social centers, eventually they all (did)....²⁴

...I'm afraid I would have to admit that at the time most of the country schools closed, the quality of education (as an average) was declining more rapidly in the country schools than than it was in the town schools, and children transferring to town school or entering high school after completing country school were at a distinct disadvantage. However (mostly due to 'progressive' modern teaching methods—which have proven to be far less efficient than the old ways) the quality of basic education received by the average student of today is drastically inferior to that received eighty years ago.²⁵

There were arguments on both sides, country and town. It was nice to have the children near home, especially the small ones.

And they did get a lot of individual attention. But I believe in the long run, it is probably much better as it is now. I am sure they get more physical education, art and music and things like that. Rural schools did quite well academically. The little ones learned from the older ones. The older ones helped the little ones. And it was a good attitude, almost like a family.²⁶

Sad to say, with the consolidation of our schools, the true 'community spirit' throughout the rural areas of the entire west died.²⁷

COLORADO:
1948-1950

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